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Rod Serling's

MAY 1982/\$2

# THE TWILIGHT ZONE

NEW JOURNEYS OF THE IMAGINATION  
AND ALWAYS THE UNEXPECTED

Magazine

**'THE GENERAL'S WIFE' by Peter Straub**

**A Chilling New Novelette**

**from the author of 'Ghost Story' and 'Shadowland'**



## Seven Sinister New Tales

On the Set of 'Creepshow'  
with Stephen King  
and George Romero

## 'The Four of Us Are Dying'

Rod Serling's Classic Script

## TZ Interviews Terry Gilliam

From 'Monty Python'  
to 'Time Bandits'

Full-Color Preview:

## 'Dark Crystal'

Epic Fantasy Film  
in the Tolkien Tradition

Gahan Wilson  
on Movies

Tom Disch  
on Books



# THE ROD SERLING'S TWILIGHT ZONE MAGAZINE

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# Books

by Thomas M. Disch

The reason good news should be told before bad isn't because good news is necessarily less important, but because, like the sunrise or the spring equinox, it doesn't usually come as much of a surprise. We've been waiting for it. As, if you've read the first two volumes of Gene Wolfe's tetralogy, *The Book of the New Sun*, you will have been waiting for Volume Three, *The Sword of the Lictor* (Timescape, \$15.50), and will not be surprised to be told that it continues the tale of Severian the Torturer on the same level of unparalleled accomplishment.

Actually, it should not be for me to say "unparalleled." Science fantasy is a subgenre I can generally withstand as easily as the suggestions of a television hypnotist. Even if the hands of writers I ordinarily admire, even when written by old and dear friends, I avoid the stuff. I find the formula plots predictable, the prose tawdrier than the prose of most science fiction (as though polyester were pretending to be velvet), and the allegory tinny as nursery rhymes played on an \$11.95 phonograph. Holding these convictions, I naturally don't gobble up much science fantasy, and so there may indeed be parallels to Gene Wolfe's accomplishments that I know nothing of. It would be safer, then, to call *The Sword of the Lictor* incomparable, since every first-rate work of art is a law unto itself and makes comparison odious.

Despite my enthusiasm for the book, it's a problem knowing how to do justice to its merits without telling some of the story; and that story has now progressed so far and become so complicated (the first two novels, *The Shadow of the Torturer* and *The Claw of the Conciliator*, are available in paperback from Timescape) that to offer even hints about the events of this volume would be to spoil the pleasures of Wolfe's devious plotting for those who haven't begun at the beginning. Virtually every major character is masquerading or has something up his or her sleeve. Mythical beasts from Wolfe's private bestiary appear at intervals, never more gruesomely than in this volume, which boasts an alzabo, a salamander, zoanthropes, an animate mudslide, a magnificent ogre called Typhon, and a



dungeonful of crazed mutants at the finale. As this volume ends Severian is setting off for a war, the nature of which has yet to be revealed. Maybe it never will be, since on Wolfe's Urth, as in dreams, certain fundamental questions (such as "Whose side am I on?") never are asked, while other questions of only middling dimensions receive definitive answers, as when he discusses the reasons for the educational deficiencies of black magicians. (In which passage the torturer Severian drops one of his best one-liners: "My own training was in what may be called the most fundamental of the applied sciences.")

If any complaint can be made, it would concern the demands placed on one's memory as each new volume adds another seine of wrinkles to a plot already compact of intrigues and cross-purposes. But with Volume Four, *The Citadel of the Autarch*, already safe in the hands of its publisher and scheduled to appear this November, a judicious reader, beginning the series now, should be able to pace himself through the first three volumes without too long an intermission before what promises to be one of the most complicated denouements of all time if all the

existing loose ends are to be tied in neat bows.

One parting note of warning. Skim-readers must beware. Wolfe's special effects are only apprehensible to those who will read his prose with a precision proportional to his precision as a writer. Most science fantasy—and most sf, for that matter—is written in a gassy, approximative prose from which it is possible to construct, at best, figured landscapes as sketchily drawn and crudely colored as comic book illustrations. What Wolfe offers is a much higher degree of image resolution; not photo-realism but something like an animated version of a Botticelli painting. But to have the benefit of Wolfe's verbal cinematography you must give every word its true weight and inflection. Which means, if you're an inveterate skim-reader, you should read his books—or hear them read—aloud.

If such advice sounds too much like going back to school or going to work, readers who yearn for the primal laziness of infancy may (if sleep is denied them) turn to **GOSH! WOW! (Sense of Wonder) Science Fiction** (Bantam, \$3.50), an anthology of the moldiest oldies edited by "Mister Science Fiction" (as the cover styles him), Forrest J Ackerman. Nothing I might write could convey the extraordinary smarminess of this book and its editor ("Ejfy the Terrible," as, by his own Lardneresque account, he's sometimes known) half so well as Ejfy does himself in his logorrheic preface. Here he is, explaining the genesis of **GOSH! WOW!**:

What Fred Pohl wanted me to do was turn back the clock to the first ten years of my lifelong love affair with (Scientific Romances), ("Different" Stories), (Scientific Fiction), (Scientification) (stf) (Science Fiction), (S.F., s.f., SF or sf), (sci-fi), (speculative fiction), (sci-fi), (choose one or more), and recall the stories that excited my youthful fancy. Well, I've done that. What I haven't done is reread any of them. In the first place I haven't the time. [Here ensues another exhaustive catalogue of Ejfy's duties as agent,

editor of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, and film festival guest in, count 'em, eleven foreign venues.] ... The other reason I didn't reread my selections was that Fred Pohl said "don't." The point is not to reassess their values today but to record for posterity (and presentery) what those works were that turned me on from age 9 to 19, 1926 to '36. [Sic to the above, punctuation and all.]

One sympathizes with Eftay both in his fondness for his vanished childhood (but why revert only to age nine, why not some snapshots of his first teddy bear?) and in his reluctance to read the stories he's assembled, which range from moronic to 1930s-mediocre, which is either more or less fun than 1980s-mediocre, depending on your taste for camp. As an experiment, cast Marlene Dietrich and Cary Grant in the following scene from Stanley Weinbaum's "The Red Peri" and you'll have a sample of the most competent of this book's (quoting the cover again) "Nineteen Nostalgic Knockouts":

"What's your name?" he asked abruptly.

"If you need a name to address me," she said coldly, "let it be commander."

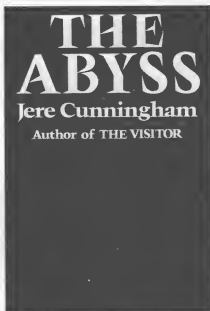
"The only person I'll call commander is one I'm willing to serve, and that'll never be the Red Peri."

She glanced sidewise at him. "What's a name, anyway?" she asked in altered tones. "See here. You're Frank Keene, but you're neither keen enough to outwit me nor frank enough to admit you love me."

"Love you!" he snorted. "Love you! Why—" He broke off suddenly. "Even if it were true," he went on, "do you think I'd have anything to do with a pirate, a murderess?"

If one were to ask why *these* nineteen knockouts and not any other nineteen equally bedraggled refugees from bygone pulps, a possible answer is to be found on the acknowledgments page, where seven of the stories are credited as appearing by arrangement with the authors' or heirs' agent, Forrest J. Ackerman. Checks for three of these

seven are waiting to be claimed by clients with no current known address. Another six stories are reprinted without their authors' explicit permission, perhaps because in these cases there's no evidence that their copyrights were renewed. These authors or their heirs are requested to contact "Holding Agent Forrest J. Ackerman for payment and a complimentary auctorial copy of this volume." Eftay is definitely getting my vote for the Big Heart Award at the next con. He must have spent *weeks* in the dust of the copyright office finding out which stories he could use strictly for the sake of nostalgia without the corrupting taint of commerce.



**The Abyss** (Wyndham, \$14.50) is a novel that gets derailed at midjourney. For fully half its length I thought author Jere Cunningham might bring off what seemed, on the face of it, a preposterous and unworkable notion even for a novel of occult terror, which has to be approached with one's imagination already half suspended. You see, there's this coal mine in Appalachia that is really, really deep, and when the miners dig one little bit too far they break through the retaining wall of Hell and all the devils are able to escape. Is that asking for trouble?

Cunningham doesn't bring it off, but it isn't for want of trying. The first chapters are vividly written. A broad cross section of a hillbilly

mining town is swiftly and solidly portrayed, and there are effective inklings of impending horror. But the nearer the horrors impinge on the realistic surface of the world Cunningham has created, the less believable they become. The evil muck that bubbles up from the mine takes any form the author thinks might connect with some existing phobia: now it's a bat, or a rat, or a cat with rabies, or maybe it's fungus, or spiders, or snakes, or just an ominous shadow. But most often it's a dog. Literally. It's also, we're to understand, the Satan of sulfur and brimstone decried by backwoods revivalists, who's going to roast us for our fornications and abominations. In short, a very old-fashioned sort of Satan compared to the urban devils of books like *The Exorcist* or *Rosemary's Baby*, who sneak up from behind.

Perhaps my problem with Cunningham's premise stems from our different religious backgrounds. I'm a fallen-away Catholic, and he, by the sound of it, is a fallen-away Fundamentalist. (Or if not presently fallen-away, fallen-away once for long enough to write about sinners with some authority.) Catholics, starting with Dante, have had fun writing from a premise of "Suppose all that stuff were true; what then?" But the Fundamentalist tradition started off with the Puritans closing down theaters. Fundamentalists distrust the imagination fundamentally, and so when a Fundamentalist lets rip with his version of the Apocalypse, the result is like this—a big *blast* of horror that lays waste the naturalistic texture of the novel.

Well, it's a theory. The problem with *The Abyss* is probably simpler. It's always a mistake for a fantasy writer to multiply his hypotheses too wantonly, especially if he means at the same time to observe the decorums of psychological verisimilitude. Cunningham piles on the grue (as Straub did in *Ghost Story*) without rhyme or reason, and the novel that results has the esthetic integrity and emotional impact of the Tunnel of Terrors at a county fair. The third time the rinky-dink cart rattles by the same glow-in-the-dark skeleton and the tape-loop goes *Boo!* I'm ready to head off for the ferris wheel. *Boo!* yourself. **B**

# Screen

## by Gahan Wilson

Although I've always been a total patsy for films, this business of viewing them in a sort of official capacity for *Twilight Zone* (together with getting involved with them directly in another incarnation) has caused me to look at them, yes, indeed, more critically. What are the damned things, anyhow? And how big a chunk of the society and its members do they represent? What do you suppose is the accumulation of their effect? And—more and more intriguing to me—where in God's name are they going?

The most obvious question one asks oneself, when one gets into a future-extrapolating, science-fictiony mood, is what will happen to the special effects?

They are obviously going to get better, right? More convincing, more directly affecting to the sensory gadgetry of the audience. When you look over what has happened in a fairly short span of time, it's almost unnerving to see how extraordinarily the area of special effects has improved. When I compare the lunar rockets Hollywood presented me as an innocent youth with the incredible gadgets they show me now, it is a little spooky to see how they have kept up with my maturation.

The cardboard-walled interiors of the interstellar ships which used to goggle me as a child, complete with the arcing spark machine in its controls, now cause me to chuckle along the lines of Nigel Bruce when I catch it on a rerun, but the hyperspace beauties they threw at me just the other day in a billion-dollar epic shot me right back to the goggle.

True, when I am pottering about in my seventies, *Star Wars* and Sean Connery's mining colony will seem pretty quaint, I am sure. (After all, haven't I just returned from an amusing holiday jaunt to the moon? Is not New York now totally roofed over? Do I not now subsist entirely on green pills?) But by then Hollywood, which will have moved



"Hollywood will have moved from the international to the intergalactic mode." In 1956, escape meant Mike Todd's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, directed by Michael Anderson, but future audiences will voyage on more sophisticated craft.

easily from the international to the intergalactic mode, will have devised pretty baubles which will cause my rheumy eyes to pop and my white locks to stand on end like the quills of a fretful porcupine, you bet.

The extravisual sensory attack has obviously only just begun, here in the primitive 1980s. Outside of a few not particularly effective swipes at the possibilities of smell by Mike Todd and Divine, the only area which has been explored in any depth has been sound. True, the sound has been upped in the lower registers so as to make your posterior tingle in order

that you might empathize a little more with the earthquake on screen, but by and large your ears have been the target.

The first one I recall really trying hard to come at you from all sides was *House of Wax*, a Vincent Price remake of the Lionel Atwill golden oldie, *The Mystery of the Wax Museum*. My gracious, there wasn't a place in the Paramount Theater where they hadn't thought to stuff yet another loudspeaker, so that when Winnie came crawling-limping up the cobblestone street in his slouch hat and cape and cabbage

face, darned if a Theremin didn't howl at you from yet another new direction and try and make you jump an inch or two more off your seat!

Now, of course, the fidelity of the sound is vastly improved, and the speakers are able to absorb much, much more in the way of punishment. Not, however, the ears of the audience; and I wonder when the first lawsuit will be filed by a deafened or at least hearing-impaired patron who, staggering forth from the auditorium, walks directly into the path of a Mack truck because he is unable to make out the blare of its klaxon over the buzzing in his head. Not long from now, is my guess; and not long after that it will be routine for all tickets to bear a little paragraph on their backs disclaiming any responsibility on the part of the theater for physical injuries inflicted by the entertainment on its audience.

Because it won't be long at all before this ear business will be small potatoes—for why stop with sound? Once the exhibitors have worked out some way with their lawyers to dissociate themselves from physical damages done to the patrons, the horses, perhaps literally, will be off.

Imagine Spattervision ©, for instance, where you personally are sprayed with blood from the throat of the lady being axed onscreen! Or pelted with little bits of hot lava spewing from the mouth of the title role of *Volcano*! Or even besmirched from the puking of the little girl throwing up green pea soup in *Exorcist III*!

Sure, the management will provide wetproof suits or, more likely, sell them ("get your soveneer seaweed-proof wraparound for *Atlantis Rises*, folks!"), but there will invariably be leakage; and when they release the remake of *Public Enemy*, somebody's sure to get juice in his eye when the actor playing the Cagney part crushes the grapefruit into his moll's upturned face. There will be problems.

Even riskier to attend will be films featuring Thermofeel ©. You'll have to bundle up if you want to live all the way through *Lost in the Arctic*, and be sure to buy extra soft drinks at the candy stand if you don't want to completely dehydrate along toward the end of its smash successor, *Lost in the Sahara*.



"It will no longer be necessary to chew on their feet . . ." The relentless star of Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) will be the prototype of an even more fearsome creature in *Jaws XXXIII*, that summertime hit of 1993.



"Lassie enjoyed a whole new vogue . . ." New special-effects techniques will enable moviegoers of the future to bark and wag their tails just like the professionals.

The most dangerous tactile effect, one that will be abandoned after its disastrous premiere at the Wilton Theater in Lamont, Ohio, will be Artifaction ©, wherein actual objects drop from on high directly onto the seats below, not excluding the balconies. The producers of Artifaction ©, despite incredible financial loss, will regretfully abandon the technique after viewing what happens to the audience during the climactic scenes of *The Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Of course, by that time it will have become apparent that technology has left behind all need for such primitive tactics. It will no longer be necessary to hit people in the face, even with robot boxing gloves cleverly concealed in the backs of the preceding seats (as will be done in *T.K.O.*, starring Alan Ladd III), or to chew on their feet with huge teeth hidden behind trap doors under their chairs (as will be done in

*Jaws XXXIII*). No, it will dawn on the great production companies that physical contact of this crude and dangerous sort can be abandoned in favor of the more economical, and certainly safer, technique of electrical stimulation of the nerve centers.

I've had a vision of what will happen after that. Simultaneous with this radical insight (it's really wonderful how things do work out, isn't it?), there arrived a slow abandonment of the traditional form of the theater. It did not come all at once, but arrived (no pun intended) in stages.

Way back in the 1970s and before, motion picture exhibitors had noticed that the huge movie palaces built in the past were no longer in scale with the demand and that, with very few exceptions, even the most popular features failed to fill the enormous structures. Accordingly, they subdivided them into two or more smaller auditoriums and showed a different movie in each one. This proved so successful that the more daring exhibitors continued to increase the number of viewing chambers in their property and reduce the number of clientele in each until, exactly like the pornographic parlors (which had proved themselves over and over again to be a harbinger of styles to come), moviegoers found themselves being led by polite robot ushers into a tiny cell all their own.

In that cell, thanks to the aforementioned simultaneous electronic revolution, they found no screen, nor any of the other traditional apparatus of the motion picture theater save a comfortable chair. The new apparatus consisted of a number of wires with suction cups at their ends. These were fixed

on the moviegoer's temples and wrists and various other parts of his or her anatomy—depending on what sort of entertainment he or she was about to experience—by the polite robot usher, and the movie (they were to continue to be called movies right up to the unfortunate attempt to directly harness solar energy, which led to the explosion of the sun and the destruction of the solar system and the human species) entered the moviegoer's system via the most exquisitely intimate entrances his or her body owned, namely his or her nerve endings.

But what had happened to the content of the movies? Their plots, their characterizations, the depth of the interpretations? Strangely, very little.

The main alteration in the plots was produced by the demand for their increased extension, and this was because of the extraordinary amount of leisure time which plagued most moviegoers—along with everyone else, as the bulk of the population was out of work. In the 1970s, being out of work had been an almost rare condition and confined mostly to various sorts of unfortunate minorities; by the 1980s were aberrations—any character he or she wished to be: hero, heroine, villain, or even an animal or object. Thanks to INSERT, *Lassie* enjoyed a whole new vogue.

In view of the almost lifelike length of the plots (a few particularly intrepid moviegoers instructed their robots to program their movies so that *The End* coincided exactly with the cessation of the moviegoer's vital signs) and the extraordinarily close association the moviegoer had with it had become more general and was viewed with alarm; by the 1990s it was accepted as an unassailable fact of life; and from the year 2000 on, it was understood that only a fortunate elite would have any meaningful activity with which to occupy itself. Moviegoing increased incredibly, moviegoers insisted that the movies they went to take up more and more of their time. Thus the multi-incidental, arbitrarily extendable plot was born.

It was not, in any way, that the plots were different from those of the earlier, shorter movies; indeed, there was a clear demand that the



"Who would wish to personally experience *The Grapes of Wrath*?" Dust Bowl fans will have the chance to play Okie the way Henry Fonda did in John Ford's 1940 classic.



"The requests were practically nil." Audiences will soon have the chance to fight World War I over again in Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), but most will pass it up.

plots not vary from the old ones. There was a strong impulse to nostalgia, a peculiar general feeling that the past had been, somehow, "better," and, if anything, the more tried and true, the more familiar the plot, the greater was its movie's chance of becoming a success. All that was required to make the movie longer was to insert more episodes, rather in the manner of the ancient movie serials, and if this heightened the moviegoer's feeling of having escaped into the "good old days," so much the better.

The great change in characters was that, due to the innovation of INSERT (Individual Negation Serving Entertainment Reality Terms), the moviegoer ceased to be himself and became, only for the length of the movie—though there the action (being literally a part of

it), the requests for films of any profundity and seriousness were practically nil. Who could stand actually being Hamlet or Macbeth? And who would wish to personally experience *The Grapes of Wrath* or *All Quiet on the Western Front* if there were any way of avoiding it?

Eventually moviegoing became an entirely private affair and, except for particularly bizarre entertainments requiring extraordinarily elaborate equipment, moviegoers enjoyed their movies in their own home cubicles. This was encouraged by the government, as it was discovered that a moviegoer involved in a movie needed almost no calories at all, so that after the initial expenses of installing the equipment (which could be reused, of course, for moviegoer after moviegoer), maintenance costs were minimal.

At the time of the solar explosion, there were very few humans at all who were not practically constant moviegoers. A small colony on Pluto refused to participate due to a religious revelation given one of their members by an angel, and a small group in New Mexico got involved in sand sculpture and had no time for anything else, but they were the only exceptions, save for the Interplanetary Government—about seventy-five people, including the President and the Cabinet of Four. The President was against the idea of "monkeying about with the sun," as he put it, but the Cabinet overruled him, and in a matter of weeks the fatal incident occurred. Fortunately it only affected living tissue, turning it all into completely unobjectionable and easily disposed of dust, and did not hurt the movie machines at all. Nor even stop their running. 12

# Music

by Jack Sullivan

**T**he 1940s and '50s constitute a fascinating but curiously indeterminate period in musical history. Sandwiched between the innovations of "modern" radicals like Stravinsky and Debussy in the early part of the century, and the upsurge of "contemporary" experimenters like Ligeti and Crumb in the 1960s and '70s, the music of the war-haunted '40s and the quiescent '50s was relatively conservative. The earlier experiments in impressionism, primitivism, and atonality—all of which, as we have seen, fundamentally involved the creation of spectral, unearthly sounds—were beginning to wind down, and composers, like everybody else, were too preoccupied with the war and its aftermath to easily formulate new techniques or "schools."

Nevertheless, this was a rich period for large-scaled symphonic music, especially music which conjures darkness and unease. An eloquent example is Bernard Herrmann's *Symphony* (1941), an ambitious, traditionally structured four-movement work which irresistibly conveys a restless, traumatic wartime atmosphere. The five-note motif blared out in the opening by horns in unison sets a

mood of oppressive intensity that doesn't let up for three movements. Much of the piece is based on the fragmentation and accumulation of these concise but dramatic motifs. The harmonic language is tonal and relatively conservative (compared to Herrmann's atonal contemporaries,

*Sinbad*), as of later film pieces, like *Psycho*, with which it shares an obsessiveness and a feeling of compressed violence. It is available on a beautifully engineered British import conducted by the composer (Herrmann, *Symphony*, National Philharmonic

*Few listeners realize that film composer Bernard Herrmann also wrote 'serious' music, including the opera Wuthering Heights and the cantata Moby Dick.*

such as Webern and Schoenberg), but the harsh dissonances and jagged power are unmistakably contemporary.

Herrmann, of course, is known chiefly as a distinguished film composer; indeed, remarkably few listeners seem to realize that earlier in his career he wrote "serious" music (including the opera *Wuthering Heights* and the cantata *Moby Dick*). The *Symphony* is prototypical not so much of Herrmann's more romantic or fantasy-oriented film scores (*Vertigo*, *The Seventh Voyage of*

*Orchestra*, Unicorn, RHS 331). The disk is marketed in the U.S. by HNH Distributors Limited, P.O. Box 222, Evanston, Ill. 60204.

A masterpiece very similar to Herrmann's in structure and mood is the slightly older *First Symphony* by William Walton. Like Herrmann's, Walton's symphony has a long, surging first movement based on tightly organized motifs; a quicksilver scherzo full of demonic snarls and chirpings in the brass; a dark slow movement that builds to an imposing climax, only to collapse into a desolate fadeout; and an exhilarating, bacchanalian finale which attempts, without notable success, to push back the demons unleashed in the earlier movements. The only available recording of the work is an earnest but rather undernourished and pathetic performance by the Liverpool Philharmonic. Listeners are urged to search out-of-print bins for the deleted 1967 version by Andre Previn and the London Symphony (Walton, *First Symphony*, London Symphony Orchestra, RCA LSC-2927, OP), a performance of microscopic clarity and blazing intensity that helped launch Previn's career as a serious conductor. Why





*American critics accuse Walton of being too Romantic and conservative, then blast him for not being Romantic enough.*

RCA deleted this important and splendidly engineered record (one of the few "Dynagroove" records that sound halfway natural) is a depressing mystery; we can only hope it will be restored some day in the RCA Gold Seal series.

Walton's Second Symphony (1960) is a tighter, less epic, less Romantic piece. Its most magical episodes feature muted brass surrounded by shimmering strings and ghostly harp glissandi. These dreamy sections are broken up by rhythmic, karate-like dissonances for full orchestra, creating an overall

effect of rapt enchantment undergirded with danger and tension. Previn's recording of the Walton Second has been (typically) deleted, but fortunately, Columbia has reissued a budget version of George Szell's early sixties performance (Walton, Second Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Odyssey Y 33519). The pungency and incisiveness of this recording reminds us of Szell's towering achievement with the Cleveland Orchestra, an ensemble that was hardly known before he came to it.

American critics are sometimes

hard on Walton, accusing him of being too Romantic and conservative (a charge frequently leveled at British composers), and then blasting him for not being Romantic enough ("not true to himself") when he turns out a more dissonant work like the Second Symphony. The truth is that Walton, eighty years old this year, is a wonderfully resourceful artist who utilizes *whatever* techniques he needs for specific atmospheres. And what bewitching atmospheres they are!

Another major British figure in the symphonic tradition is Ralph Vaughn Williams, whose earlier music we have already traversed. As he got older (like Walton, he lived into his eighties), Vaughn Williams composed works that were increasingly spectral and forboding, a tendency culminating in the other worldly grandeur of the Seventh and Ninth Symphonies.

The Seventh, subtitled *Sinfonia*

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ALL PROCEEDS FOR THE BENEFIT OF **Thirteen**

*Wrote Vaughn Williams: 'The saxophones are not expected to behave like demented cats, but are allowed to be their own romantic selves.'*

*Antartica* (1952), is program music on a grand scale that depicts, with the help of a narrator and a wind machine (the same device—called an aeoliphone—used by Ravel in *Daphnis and Chloé*), the heroic race to the South Pole undertaken by Robert Falcon Scott, a tragedy which left Scott and his men frozen to death only eleven miles from their return depot. The profoundly alien quality of the Antarctic is evoked with darkly clashing minor chords and weird juxtapositions of old English church modes.

This ingenious use of old sounds in new, unsettling contexts is also characteristic of the Ninth Symphony (1958), Vaughn Williams's final testament, an uncompromisingly dark work (originally conceived as being programmatically connected to the fiction of Thomas Hardy). Featured in the opening and in the apocalyptic "Epilogue" of the Ninth is what is perhaps the most hauntingly beautiful use of the saxophone (actually a trio of saxophones) in music. "The saxophones," wrote the composer, "are not expected . . . to behave like demented cats, but are allowed to be their own romantic selves." Again, the listener should look for the forceful out-of-print Previn recordings, especially in the case of Previn's majestic Ninth (Vaughn Williams, Ninth Symphony, London Symphony Orchestra, RCA LSC 3280, OP; "Sinfonia Antartica," London Symphony Orchestra, RCA LSC 3066, OP), but the Adrian Boult readings are serviceable (Vaughn Williams, Ninth Symphony, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Angel S-36742; "Sinfonia Antartica," London Philharmonic Orchestra, Angel S-36763). Late Vaughn Williams can be rather cold and remote, but at the same time gripping and truly visionary. It breathes the rarified

atmosphere of final things.

Another artist who used austere modal harmonies to create chilling new sounds was the Swiss composer Frank Martin (pronounced Mar-tan). This neglected composer is a double anomaly: his music is elegantly lyrical and accessible but rarely performed—yet it is generously recorded, and a startling number of the records are still in print.

Martin was fond of Baroque and Classical concerto forms, but beneath the elegant surface is a restless sense of menace and tragedy. Listen to the spidery harpsichord in the Harpsichord Concerto (Martin, Harpsichord Concerto, Chamber Orchestra of Lausanne, Candide CE-31065), the violin soaring above dark orchestral murmurings in the Violin Concerto (Martin, Violin Concerto, Wolfgang Schneiderhan, Orchestra of Radio Luxembourg, Candide CE-31055), or the frantic Bartokian piano hammerings in the primitivistic Second Piano Concerto (Paul Badura-Skoda, piano, paired with the Violin Concerto, above). Or better yet, pick up the magnificent new recording by Neville Marriner of the Symphonie Concertante for harp,

harpsichord, piano and double string orchestra (1945), which combines the distinctive and beguiling solo sounds found in a number of Martin concertos and sets them against a rich string sonority of almost velvety blackness (Martin, *Symphonie Concertante*, Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Angel S-37577).

A much more popular composer who had his roots in the 1940s is the late Samuel Barber, an unapologetic Romantic who is known mainly for lush melodies (*Adagio for Strings, Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, but who could, when he was in the mood, set loose cataclysmic, hair-raising sounds. Anyone who doubts this should listen to the chilling *Medea's Meditation and Dance of Vengeance* (1947) (Barber, "Medea's Meditation and Dance of Vengeance," New York Philharmonic Orchestra, *Odyssey* 33230), or the surprisingly dissonant Piano Sonata (1949) (Barber, Piano Sonata, John Ewing, Desto 7120). The fiendishly difficult and stormy Piano Sonata has a distinguished line of interpreters (it was premiered by no less than Vladimir Horowitz). Van Cliburn recorded the Sonata for RCA (1971), in one of the most passionate, gripping performances of his career—a performance where, for once, he abandoned his customary reticence in the studio and played the hell out of the piano—but RCA, alas, seems determined to delete its most valuable and exciting recordings (Barber, Piano Sonata, Van Cliburn, RCA LSC 3229, OP).

The most prolific and perhaps the greatest mid-century symphonic composer was Dimitri Shostakovich (1906-1975), whose long career spans three musical periods. His most intensely disturbing and spectral works, however, come not from the '40s and '50s but earlier (the 1930s) and later (1960s and 70s). The reason is horribly simple: Stalin, a man with a hard heart but apparently tender ears, sat too close to the brass during one of Shostakovich's more brutal works, and Shostakovich immediately found himself the victim of censorship. Nevertheless, he managed to sneak in a number of spectacularly morbid and horrific works, which will be the subject of a future column. **17**





# Terry Gilliam:

## Finding comedy on 'the dark side of the coin'

MONTY PYTHON'S LONE AMERICAN TALKS ABOUT 'TIME BANDITS,' FAIRY TALES, AND THE USES OF UNHAPPY ENDINGS.

Interviewer **James Verniere** reports:

Monty Python's Flying Circus: the very name conjures up visions of awful families, silly walks, and sadistic game shows. For many people, the British series that aired on PBS in the seventies was one of the very few reasons to stay awake during a dreadful decade. Irreverent, outrageous, often incomprehensibly bizarre, Monty Python was a breath of fresh air during the disco-Watergate era when many right thinkers were seriously considering cryogenics.

Terry Gilliam, co-writer and director of last fall's surprise hit, *Time Bandits*, was the only American in that troupe of certifiable lunatics. Born in Minneapolis on November 22, 1940, Terry Gilliam is the son of a carpenter. In 1951 Gilliam and family moved to Los Angeles where he attended high school and studied political science at college. After working as an illustrator and editor, Gilliam went to England in the late sixties, where he became one of the now legendary Pythons.

Hard to believe that a non-Briton could hold his own in the midst of the demented Anglican humor of the other Pythons: John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin, and Graham Chapman. But Gilliam not only held his own; he subsequently went on to codirect the first of the feature films that bear the troupe's trademark, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1974), a parody of the Arthurian legends, and he cowrote—with the other Pythons—*Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979), a parody of the New Testament. Although Gilliam did not direct or act in the troupe's first feature, *And Now for Something Completely Different* (1972, directed by Ian McNaughton) he did supply his ingenious animated sequences—those grotesque couplings of Victoriana and the Marquis de Sade.

*Gilliam's Jabberwocky* (1977), although generally regarded as a Monty Python film, is not. It was Gilliam's first solo directorial effort and starred another ex-Python, Michael Palin. That combination of Gilliam and Palin was destined to make magic again when they reteamed to write the script for *Time Bandits*.

*Time Bandits* is the story of a boy named Kevin who goes on a magical journey through time and space with six dwarfs (alter egos of the six original Pythons?) named Randall, Fidget, Wally, Og, Stutter, and Vermin. The dwarfs, formerly employed in the Repairs Department by the Supreme Being, have stolen a map of the holes in time and set off with the boy to become the greatest thieves in history.

Full of magic and humor, *Time Bandits* recalls the charm of such films as *The Wizard of Oz*, *Invaders from Mars*, and *Star Wars*, with more than a passing nod to Alice in Wonderland. One would imagine that such a film would have American distributors crawling all over each other to get it.

But no. For a time, *Time Bandits* was an orphan. After the failure of

ing. I feel great chunks of my brain dropping off. You know I actually forget words, and that really frightens me. Someone will ask me about a word, and I suddenly remember that I no longer know what it means. My vocabulary is falling out of my ears, and my books are my only salvation. I find myself clutching my books more and more as I grow older.

**TZ:** You seem very bookish for a film director.

**Gilliam:** One of the things I learned on this tour is that American kids are illiterate. They don't read. English kids still read. I know because I've lived there for fourteen years. My daughter, who is now five, is reading. I find it absolutely frightening that children don't read because it is the only pure means of communication. One writer talking to one reader.

**TZ:** In *The Uses of Enchantment*, psychologist Bruno Bettelheim says that fairy tales help a child to adjust, to understand his place in the world, by creating anxieties in him and teaching him about the existence of good and evil. Is that what you tried to do in *Time Bandits*?

**"I can't accept that there is no place like home. Clearly there are better places than home."**

Under the Rainbow, the industry pundits announced that films with "little people" could never make money. So *Time Bandits* was persona non grata with the majors.

Finally, *Avco Embassy* came to the rescue and for its effort was rewarded with the hit of the dreary fall season.

**TZ:** Since *Time Bandits* is about childhood, I wondered how you feel about growing old?

**Gilliam:** I hate it. I find my brain aging a bit. It bothers me that I'm ag-

**Gilliam:** Yes, that's exactly what the film's about. When you're a child, there are frightening, horrifying, amazing experiences that only fairy tales can prepare you for. The moral of most fairy tales is that somehow the child gets out alive and whole. They also teach children that there is evil and danger and treachery in the world, which is something the film also says. So you get the dark side too. *Sesame Street* is lovely, but it presents a false image of the world. I prefer to include the dark side of the coin.

# Terry Gilliam

One of the reasons I made this film has to do with my daughter. One day I read her some fairy tales from one of her books and they were bowdlerized. The wolf doesn't eat grandma, and the hunter isn't a hunter. He's daddy come home from the shopping center or something. It's suburbanized. It's made mundane, and there are no frightening elements to it. And I think that as a result of such laundering, a lot of kids aren't prepared for evil when it comes around the corner, and, *bang*, it gets them.

*Time Bandits* is a fairy tale. It works on those levels. It's about disenchantment and enchantment. It's the two things working together.

**TZ:** Is the disenchantment the reason Kevin doesn't really like his parents?

**Gilliam:** Right. And his heroes aren't what he expects them to be. At the beginning the parents have clearly rejected the kid. In the middle of the film, he's asked if he wants to go back to them and he makes up his mind not to. In the end when he comes back, they're blown up. Now, I don't take that literally. It's his imagination running its course. The only reassuring element is that Agamemnon is somewhere in the world saying, "Don't worry. Maybe it isn't what you think it is."

Parents are really disturbed by the ending, but kids aren't. My daughter, who was four-and-a-half when she saw it, said, "Well, Kevin told them not to touch it, that it was evil, and that's what happens to parents who don't listen to their kids."

**TZ:** Why are Kevin's heroes so disappointing?

**Gilliam:** Because that's the way it is. Even Agamemnon isn't what Kevin expects him to be. He expects Agamemnon to teach him sword fighting, how to kill people, and instead Agamemnon teaches him to do magic tricks.

**TZ:** The premise of the film is bold. You use all of time and space as your canvas.

**Gilliam:** That's just megalomania. Cosmic megalomania. But it's also a metaphor for a kid's imagination.

What I've found is that an awful lot of kids haven't developed their imaginations. They've been restricted early on. They're forced to grow up much too quickly.

I grew up with radio, which is magic because you have to exercise your



With *Mad's* Harvey Kurtzman as editor, Terry Gilliam as an associate editor, and Gloria Steinem as, at one time, assistant editor, *Help!* entertained readers too old for *Mad* in the early 1960s. Among those who appeared in its pages, either as writers, cartoonists, or actors in photo-stories, were Woody Allen, Robert Crumb, Henry Youngman, Dick Van Dyke, Shel Silverstein, Jack Davis, Will Elder, Orson Bean, Tom Poston, William Tenn, John Collier, Ray Bradbury, Algis Budrys, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Sheckley, Gahan Wilson, and Rod Serling.



"It reeks of dirt and dust and smoke." Michael Palin played the hapless hero of Gilliam's first solo directorial effort, *Jabberwocky*.

imagination to appreciate it. You have to invent the sets, the colors, everything.

Television doesn't do any of that for the most part, except very imaginative television. There are no shadows or gaps to let us fill in the bits. In fact, the pace is done so that you don't have to think.

**TZ:** What kinds of books did you read as a child?

**Gilliam:** I was reading the Hardy Boys, actually. And *Lassie* and *Laddie*. I was into dog books very heavily. I loved *Treasure Island* and Grimm's, of course. I grew up on comic books too. *Mad* magazine.

**TZ:** I know that you subsequently worked with Harvey Kurtzman, but what attracted you to his magazine as a boy?

**Gilliam:** The satire and the sex. I remember having to hide copies of *Mad* magazine because of Wally Wood's drawings of his girls—his vava-voom. They were wonderful, *zaf* creatures and I'd hide them because I suspected there was something really naughty there. They were so sensual.

**TZ:** Were you a fan of *EC Comics*?

**Gilliam:** Yes, and *Two-Fisted Tales*. Those were all the same people. Harvey Kurtzman, Wally Wood, Jack Davis, Willy Elder, Arnold Roth, and all the rest. It was really weird years later when I went to New York fresh out of college and to the Algonquin to keep an appointment I had with Harvey. At the time, he was working on the very first episode of "Little Annie Fanny" for *Playboy*. Harvey got all his artists, put them up in a suite, and wouldn't let them out until the episode was finished.

So there they were. All my heroes together in one room. It was stunning. Then a couple of days later, a job as assistant editor opened up at *Mad* and I got it. So I'd have to say that *Mad* magazine influenced me as much as any books or movies that I saw as a child.

**TZ:** Were you influenced by any other films when making *Time Bandits*?

**Gilliam:** Well, it's very eclectic. I don't deny any influences, although it is not a parody or a pastiche. All the influences are there, but they're twisted and changed and reformed. You forgot to include *The Thief of Bagdad*, the Korda version. *The Wizard of Oz* was a strong influence, although I actually resented the sentiment of the film. All



Gilliam as a squire to Graham Chapman's King Arthur in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, which he codirected with Terry Jones.



and as a bearded Holy Landsman, second from right, in *Monty Python's "Life of Brian,"* with (left to right) Michael Palin, John Cleese, Graham Chapman, director Terry Jones, and, at top, Eric Idle.



A one-time assistant editor at *Mad*, Gilliam confesses: "I'd have to say that *Mad* magazine influenced me as much as any books or movies that I saw as a child."

those magical journeys and in the end we're brought back to this mundane world and this is supposed to be better. I can't accept that there is no place like home. Clearly there *are* better places than home.

**TZ:** How did you first conceive of *Time Bandits*?

**Gilliam:** At first, it was the single image of the knight on the charger coming through the kid's wardrobe.

**TZ:** Why did you include dwarfs?

**Gilliam:** Because they're a part of fairy tales, and because I wanted to keep the film at a child's level. So we kept the camera low and we relied on things a child would know when making the sets. Inside the castle of the Evil Genius at the end, the set is just a checkerboard with Lego [a popular British building-block toy].

**TZ:** How did you find financing for a project as bizarre as this?

**Gilliam:** Actually, it was quite easy. Denis O'Brien and George Harrison put up the money for *Life of Brian*. I'd done a couple of scripts they didn't like. Then I did a treatment for *Time Bandits* and I struck some Pavlovian nerve end. Rather than saliva, money poured out. He and George just said, "Go ahead."

**TZ:** Were there any technical problems?

**Gilliam:** All we had were technical problems. Too many to get into. One I could mention is that all of the special effects had to be redone, and you'd be

surprised how inexpensively we did them.

**TZ:** What was your budget?

**Gilliam:** Less than \$5 million, although the studio is telling people that it cost \$12 million, which infuriates me.

**TZ:** Why?

**Gilliam:** Because it took talent and hard work to do it for so little, and the implication is that money buys quality.

**TZ:** You co-wrote the script with Michael Palin. How do you two work together?

**Gilliam:** Mike and I have different strengths. He's terribly prolific, and I'm not. So I rewrote while he wrote. He has a perfect sense of dialogue and

pulled off everywhere, and we were branded as blasphemers. I wanted to eliminate that connection, so that parents would allow their children to see the film. Actually, I'd like parents to see the film *with* their children.

**TZ:** What was George Harrison's contribution?

**Gilliam:** Money and the song at the end. He trusted me to make the movie.

**TZ:** What about your professional background prior to your Monty Python days?

**Gilliam:** I was an editor of *Help!* magazine, an offshoot of *Mad*. I was an illustrator, and I studied animation on the side. I knew all the principles, so I bought a used 16mm Bolex and started doing my own. You know, dancing cigarettes, that kind of thing.

When I went to England, where I met Mike and Terry and Eric, I was making my own animated films. John and Graham joined us and we decided that we all wanted to work on something together. The BBC gave us a shot and the rest is... history.

**TZ:** What was it like to be the only American in Monty Python?

**Gilliam:** Partly, it worked because I was doing something completely different from the others: the animation. It was quite separate. I didn't do much writing as such, just my sections.

I don't know why my work succeeded in England. I was doing the same kind of thing here. But I had to go to England before people found it funny and began to appreciate it. I have no idea why it should be so.

**TZ:** Were you a fan of British humor?

**Gilliam:** Oh yes, I listened to the

## "In the South, Life of Brian was pulled off everywhere, and we were branded as blasphemers."

character, although in the end we didn't use much dialogue.

**TZ:** Why did you avoid using the words "God" and "the devil" in *Time Bandits*?

**TZ:** It was a fudge because of the *Life of Brian*. We wanted to avoid controversy with fundamentalists. We did not want to get into the same kind of difficulty we had with *Life of Brian*. We wanted this to be a family picture, not something religious groups would picket.

In the South, *Life of Brian* was

"Goon Shows" on the radio, and I always liked the British comedies: *The Man in the White Suit*, *The Lavender Hill Mob*, the whole lot of the Ian Carmichael-Terry Thomas *School for Scoundrels* stuff. I was always an anglophile.

It was odd with Monty Python because after the first few meetings on the series I would withdraw to work and then I'd arrive on the day of taping with a can of film and say, "That's it for this show."

**TZ:** Was there a competition between

the Cambridge and the Oxford people in Monty Python?

**Gilliam:** There is a difference between the Cambridge and the Oxford people in Python and also in *Beyond the Fringe*. The Oxford people seem to be nicer. They're shorter to begin with. In *Beyond the Fringe*, the Cambridge half was Peter Cook and Jonathan Miller. Both tall and sharp. The Oxford side was Alan Bennett and Dudley Moore; both small and gentler.

John Cleese, Eric Idle, and Graham Chapman were the Cambridge half of Python, much more acid and sharp. Michael Palin and Terry Jones were Oxford, and I always sided with them. We're shorter, more humanistic. It's very odd. Perhaps all the short ones at Cambridge don't survive.

**TZ:** As an animator, what is your opinion of the state of the art in animated films?

**Gilliam:** You mean Bakshi? The last Bakshi I saw was *Lord of the Rings*, which I thought was disastrous. It was disgraceful. I just think he's so sloppy. It started out well, but he seemed to lose interest or energy. His early work, like *Coomskin*, is so much better. He angers me because I think there's a lot of talent being wasted.

**TZ:** Many people are curious about the fate of *Jabberwocky*.

**Gilliam:** A classic in its own time, or so I'm told. It's very funny. When *Jabberwocky* came out in England, it didn't do anything. Now in all the English reviews of *Time Bandits*, the critics call *Jabberwocky* a classic. It kills me. Where were these people when I needed them?

*Jabberwocky* was a weird one. I was very stupid and arrogant to follow *Holy Grail* with another medieval film. It's asking for comparisons. But I did it

**"Now the critics call Jabberwocky a classic. It kills me. Where were these people when I needed them?"**

because I felt there was much more material to explore.

I wanted to build the atmosphere. What happened was that the producers wanted more of a comedy, and it wasn't written that way. It was written as three stories. It's still the most atmospheric thing I've ever done. It reeks of dirt and dust and smoke.

John Boorman screened it a dozen times for the crew of *Excalibur*, which is supposed to look like *Jabberwocky*. It doesn't. The makers of *Dragonslayer* studied *Jabberwocky*. It's become a director's film.

The studio tried to sell it as a Monty Python film, which made people very angry because although Michael played the lead and I directed, it isn't Python humor. It's not great belly laughs. It's chuckles and wry smiles. But I gave in to the many pressures and cut it, and now I'm unhappy I did.

**TZ:** What's your next project?

**Gilliam:** There are two things: One is the nightmare side and the other is the jolly side. It's quite clear that in

everything I've done these two sides do battle all the time. You know, like the Manichean heresy. Remember that? I wonder how many people were burned at the stake for thinking that?

The nightmare story is a kind of Walter Mitty meets Franz Kafka. It's really about paranoia. It's about a guy who becomes a victim of the machine in which he is a cog. It's about paperwork and bureaucracy. The protagonist is a clerk who works in the Ministry of Torture. I know it sounds like *1984* and *Brave New World*, but I've never read those books and I won't because I don't want to be influenced by them.

The nightmare story is called *Brazil* (you know the song?). In it people will be eaten by paper and wrecked houses will spill blood and guts. It'll be like nothing anyone has ever seen. I anticipate trouble raising money for this project.

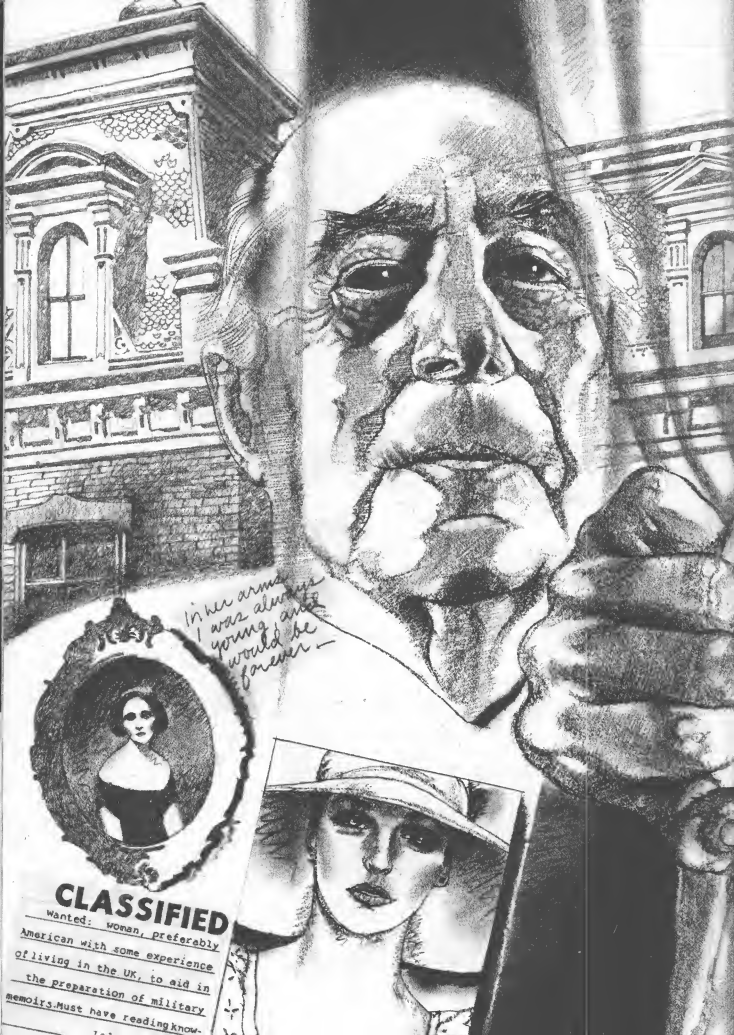
The jolly project is a film adaptation of *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, in which I want to combine live action, animation, and theater. I want to film in a seventeenth-century Hogarthian theater and use cut-out scenery and painted props very much like my own animation. You know, a creaking moon rising up behind the actors.

I have an idea for a scene in which a character is riding through a forest at night and suddenly you notice that the trees are cut-out trees. It's about reality and illusion and the bridge we build between them. What I find fascinating about Baron Munchausen is that he tells these terribly tall tales but insists that you believe they are absolutely true. I think it'll be good fun. **17**



Gilliam rehearses a scene in *Time Bandits* with Katherine Helmond and Peter Vaughan. Vaughan plays a seagoling ogre with back trouble, Helmond his dutiful wife.





*In her arms  
I was always  
young, and  
would be  
forever -*



## **CLASSIFIED**

Wanted: woman, preferably  
American with some experience  
of living in the UK, to aid in  
the preparation of military  
memoirs. Must have reading know-





THE ENGLISH WERE A SHIFTY RACE, HER HUSBAND WARNED; BUT ANDREA NEVER REALIZED HOW RIGHT HE WAS UNTIL SHE MET THE GENERAL—AND LEARNED JUST WHAT IT MEANT TO BE . . .

# The General's Wife

by Peter Straub

*For Carlos Fuentes*

**I**t took Andy Rivers a couple of months to fully understand that her husband hated London. Phil had only barely tolerated Chicago—he complained about the restaurants, the climate, the way the people dressed—and for months Andy had assumed that her husband's feeling about London were similar to this carping but finally unimportant level of dislike. Phil had missed New York—that was the real motive for his thudding invective about Chicago. But his feelings about London went much deeper. He did not merely dislike London, he did not merely find it uncomfortable and inconvenient; he hated the city. London forever gave him some new aspect of itself to resent. When he was at work, Andy assumed, he was aggressive but otherwise neutral; at home he saw no reason to conceal his true attitudes. Phil thought that English people, especially the English people employed by his company, were condescending, shifty, unreliable, dishonest—there was no end to the qualities Phil found to dislike and despise in his employees. "Maybe they're just being wary," Andy suggested. "Wary?" Phil shouted. "They damn well better be wary! I can fire every one of the sneaky sons of bitches!"

He needed that, Andy saw; one of the sides of himself that he could not afford to show at his office was his insecurity. And perhaps Phil's insecurity was

## The General's Wife

the basis for his hatred of London, as it was for the beatings he gave his wife.

Of course Andy saw that Phil was also, whatever his other feelings, jealous of London—as she had come to realize that her marriage was a shell with only a little dust on the interior to mark where their shared happiness had once been, she had been increasingly seduced by the city. From their Belgravia house—the company's house, but theirs for a year—she could walk to Mayfair, to Kensington, even to the West End. She discovered the National Gallery, the Tate, the South Bank, the Courtauld Gallery. That the city was so different from Chicago and New York excited her—she was pleased, as Phil was offended, by its foreignness. She met people here and there, and she listened to them: Andy *listened*. She heard that vein of irony that runs through so much English conversation, and she embraced it—it felt like a liberation to her. What Andy began to understand, after a month or so of pursuing her private treats in London, was that conversation could be a kind of sport as long as you had the freedom from time to time to say things you didn't mean. Andy knew that if one of Phil's employees were to say to him that he liked Phil's suit or his shirt or his necktie, that he was actually telling Phil that the suit or shirt or tie was ugly, that it looked absurd in London and should be put at the back of a closet until its owner went home. Phil, who had a sense of irony only when he got angry, would have thought he was being complimented.

So Andy liked English conversations, Phil distrusted them; Andy liked English social mannerisms, Phil felt attacked by them; Andy wanted to get to know the company's English executives, Phil insisted on seeing only the other Americans employed by the firm. Phil loved the softball games in Regent's Park, the discussions about where to get the best hamburger and the best pizza, the closed-circuit showings of the Super Bowl and heavyweight boxing matches in a Leicester Square cinema. During the whole year in England, Phil fumed about the way the barbers at Harrod's cut his hair—Andy thought the haircuts were dandy, the rest banal.

"I want a job," she said to him one day in late May. "I'm going to see if I can get one."

"A job?" Phil exploded. "You want a job? What kind of job can you get here—without even a work permit? Besides, we already earn twice as much as anybody else in this rathole of a country. You can't get a job."

His expression announced that Andy was persecuting him again. "I still would like to look for one," she said. "I think it might be nice if I could meet some more English people. You never want to see any of the people from the company. I'm going to start looking at the want ads."

"Want ads? Want ads? You want to get a job in

a sweatshop? Maybe you want a job as a barmaid. Well, that's right, that's where you ought to go if you want to meet English people. Just hang around a filthy pub somewhere, you'll meet them all right. Englishmen," Phil sneered, "Englishmen are a bunch of stuffy, pretentious hypocrites. And they're unreliable. And they pee sitting down."

That night Andy conspicuously read the want ads of the *Evening Standard* while Phil glowered at her from his overstuffed armchair. "You'll meet Andy Capp," he said. "Is that what you want out of life, Andy Capp?"

What Phil thought scarcely made any difference to her, as long as he did not get so excited that he beat her. She went to the nearest shop that sold newspapers, magazines, candy, and cigarettes, and put in a standing order for the *Times Educational Supplement*. She scarcely knew what she was looking for, but she knew that one day she would find it. Phil grumbled and grumbled, but after a few weeks acted as though Andy's feeble job hunting did not affect him one way or the other—maybe he knew that she was close to leaving him.

One Friday in the middle of June, Andy was aimlessly though contentedly poking through the shops in the Burlington Arcade when she decided to walk over to Soho for lunch. She would find some little Italian restaurant near Soho Square, and then after lunch go up to Oxford Street. Andy had no plan, she merely wanted to fill up the day before she could go home and get ready for the evening—she and Phil were going out with one of the junior Americans in the company and his wife. The junior American had tickets for the Royal Ballet. Afterwards, Phil would insist on their going to the Savoy bar, where they would have time for one hasty drink before closing time. Phil would have fulfilled two contradictory desires, to have seemed to have pleased his wife by taking her to the ballet, and to have pleased himself by afterward cheating everyone else out of dinner.

Andy took her time getting to Soho; she wandered through any street that looked interesting or pretty: she was still in the process of discovering London. So she went across Regent Street and zigged and zagged through the tiny Soho streets—these were decidedly more interesting than pretty—and eventually found herself on crowded higgledy-piggledy Old Compton Street. Here she happily peered into windows, rejecting a bistro and then one Italian restaurant, reading the notices for "French Lessons" and "Massage Therapy" on the public notice-boards. Patisseries stood next to bookstore windows filled with pictures of naked women with black tape covering the nipples of their pillowlike breasts, their pubic hair. Sex and food seemed the main products of the Soho economy.

Andy turned into Frith Street and started up toward Soho Square. Along her way she bought a

Two of the windows on the second floor were cracked. Net curtains hung like cobwebs behind these. She could find no bell. The knocker, too, had been removed . . .

magazine to read during lunch, an early copy of the *New Statesman*. Frith Street provided a wide range of choice: this was the first time Andy had seen it, and it seemed to be lined with Italian restaurants. Andy went past the Osteria Larana, Bianchi's, several others, until she was nearly at Soho Square—then she saw the last restaurant on the street, announced by a simple sign reading PIZZERIA. As she got closer, she saw that it did not look like a pizzeria—through the wine bottles in the window she could dimly see small pretty tables with white tablecloths, flowers in small vases. Beneath this restaurant, down a steep flight of metal stairs, was another massage parlor. On the window she read the name of the restaurant, Al Camino. The Soho combination, sex and food. She went in. A waiter showed her to a small table against a stucco wall; she ordered; she leafed through her magazine.

At the back, mixed in with the ads for typing services and finders of out-of-print books, she saw: *Wanted: woman, preferably American with some experience of living in UK, to aid in the preparation of military memoirs. Must have reading knowledge of French. Salary negotiable.* There was an address on Kensington Park Gardens.

Andy circled the ad, which seemed in an almost uncanny way to have been written especially for her. Her veal Valdostana arrived, the waiter poured from the carafe into her wine glass. She turned to the magazine's book pages, read a long review by Clive James, then turned back to the help wanted ad. She reread *Wanted: woman* . . . again twice, and flipped back consideringly to read what Clive James had to say about George Bernard Shaw.

The next day, a Friday, Andy was in Kensington at ten in the morning. She had to return a blouse to Biba's because Phil had hated it on sight; she thought that she might replace it with one of their bad-mannered hats. After returning the blouse to the second floor of the department store, she wandered around for a time, imagining how outraged Phil would be if she actually bought more clothes in here, decided not to get the hat, and went outside. At a newsstand she bought a copy of the *Spectator* and took it to a little cafe at the bottom of Kensington Church Street to read the book pages.

Seated at a rickety table with a cup of coffee before her, Andy read a long review of a Carlos Fuentes novel and decided to get the book even

though the review was muddled and hostile. She puttered through several more book reviews, a movie column, the theater criticism. She sipped at the strong coffee. A waitress came by and asked, "Care for more coffee, love?" Andy turned to the back pages of the magazine, and an advertisement for help jumped toward her right off the page.

*Wanted: woman, preferably American with some experience of living in the UK, to aid in the preparation of military memoirs. Must have reading knowledge of French. Salary negotiable.*

Andy folded the *Spectator* in half, put a pound note on the table, and went out of the cafe to flag down a taxicab.

2

Up Kensington Church Street the cab went, and turned into seedy, raffish Notting Hill. The driver took her up Kensington Park Road, and Andy, who could not remember the name of the street she wanted, thought with dismay that the house was here—on this noisy, perpetually jammed street too close to Portobello Road. She could (quite mistakenly) smell rape and killing in the air, see it in the thin slouched bodies of the men clustered before pubs with pint glasses in their hands: could smell too the perfume of crushed fruit. Sex and food.

But the driver turned into a quiet street at the top end of Ladbroke Square, and the houses were large and quiet and elegant; and this was the street named in the help wanted advertisement.

When she got out of the cab, Andy checked the address and reassured herself that the tall brick building before her had the same address as that given in the want ad. The building had an oddly blank, characterless facade. Two of the windows on the second floor were cracked. Net curtains hung like cobwebs behind these, as behind all the windows. Andy went up the wide gray concrete steps and searched beside the door for the bell. She could find no bell. In the brick were four holes where a bell might have been. On the gray surface of the door, small black flecks like mushroom embryos dotted the peeling and cracking paint. Andy rapped her knuckles next to the painted-over numerals on this door, and only then realized that the knocker too had been removed. Two small cylindrical holes showed where the screws had been. She rapped again at the peeling door.

"Who's that? Who's that, down there?" The angry voice came from above. "Show yourself."

Andy went backwards down the steps, craning her neck backward as she descended. The wizened, narrow head of a furious old man at first appeared to be growing out of the brick facade. When Andy reached the sidewalk again, she saw that his head and shoulders were protruding from an upthrust window—white specks floated down lazily, and Andy thought

# The General's Wife

they were dust until she saw that they were flecks of paint dislodged when the old man had thrown up the bottom half of the window.

"The job?" Andy asked. "I mean, my name is Andrea Rivers, and I've come about the job you're advertising in the *Spectator* and the *New Statesman*."

"Grump," the old man said or coughed, and was holding out a heavy ball of something. "Let yourself in and come upstairs. The front door key is the one with the tape on the handle." He let the ball drop, and a clump of keys came flying straight down to the pavement, where they landed with a jangling thump. Andy picked them up, glanced back toward the third-floor window and saw that it was empty, and after some difficulty found the long key with a strip of smudgy tape on its handle.

The house smelled of must. Thick dustballs sat along the edges of the cool tiled entry, which advanced through the gloom around the side of a narrow staircase. Even after Andy's eyes had adjusted to the change from the bright, humid street, it still looked to her as though the descending half of the staircase—the flight ahead of her at the end of the entry—went down into pure blackness, blackness as deep as a pool. On the wall to her right, immediately beside a tall brown door, was a dusty picture of Jesus—so faded that it was nearly the color of the door. Then Andy saw that the paneled side of the staircase, fifty years ago stained a dead dark brown, held a virtual gallery of similarly faded religious pictures. Here Jesus spoke from the Mount of Olives, here a saint screeched in torment as monsters and demons crawled about him, here Mary held her haloed child. Andy went up the dark staircase.

The same black specks—now Andy knew they were buds of mold—grew in the brownish paint of the stairwell. The house felt cool and damp, as if it had somehow repelled the hot June sun. Balls of dust lifted wherever she put her feet.

At the top of the staircase a filthy skylight illuminated the wooden slats of the floor, the faded green expanse of door. Andy opened it and went through into a hallway off which two doors led to what would once have been servants' quarters. Up here Andy could feel the June heat: the air felt slow and heavy, tired.

She knocked at the first door and heard an answering "Grump." Andy stepped into a room smelling of melted wax, stale flesh, and unchanged bedclothes. The old man lay beneath a gray sheet on his bed across the room, regarding her silently and suspiciously. The rear of the room was on fire—Andy saw in the next second that it was an impromptu chapel where hundreds of candles stood in saucers on a wooden table. On the other side of the table was a framed portrait of Jesus Christ with his hands held

out beneath a levitating Sacred Heart encased in flame.

"Name," the old man said. His hair was wild, his skin almost as gray and dingy as the sheets. He seemed exhausted by the effort of shouting at her from his window. The atmosphere in the small white bedroom was ovenlike.

"Rivers. Andrea Rivers."

"I am General Anthony August Leck. Does that mean anything to you?" He glared defiantly at her from his caved-in face.

"Yes," Andy said. She tried unsuccessfully to keep from showing her astonishment—August Leck had been an authentic hero of the Second World War, an intimate of both Montgomery and Eisenhower (a notable accomplishment, dealing with those two out-sized egos, all the more notable since August Leck was reckoned a demanding and eccentric man). "Of course it does." General Leck had overseen the English effort in Europe while Montgomery was in Africa: or had he been in Africa while Montgomery was in Europe?

Andy remembered less of the details of his career than the peculiar whiff of the scandalous that had accompanied it. It came back to her that, for part of the war, the General had been called "The Cannibal" until a brilliant victory cleansed his name; and that he had been a notorious womanizer.

"You have the job," the withered man on the bed told her. Nothing of the womanizer remained in that shell.

"Keys."

"What?"

"Please return my keys." He held out a spotted paw.

Andy came toward him and dropped the heavy knot of keys into his hand. "You just hired me?" she asked. "Just like that?"

"I have hired you," the old man said. "I want you to start immediately. We cannot afford to waste any time. Your room will be on the floor just below this one, and you will pick up whatever things you want to have with you and install them in the room this afternoon. You will begin work tomorrow morning at six o'clock. In the advertisement I said that the salary would be negotiable, but I am prepared to give you fifty pounds a week, and that should put an end to the need for negotiation. Is that understood?"

"I can't move in here," Andy said. "I'm married. I can still help you with your memoirs, but I can't live here too. My husband and I live in Belgravia."

"It would be Belgravia," said General Leck, lying back on the bed with his eyes closed. "Grump. You weren't supposed to be married. You were supposed to live here. You've made me unhappy. I don't want you to be married."

Andy saw that the General was intermittently



senile. His hands were trembling; he said "Grump" once more, and symmetrical tears leaked from his clamped-shut eyes.

"How long have you been married?" he asked in a shaking voice.

"A long time. Look, General Leck, if you don't want me, I'll go away. If you'll still hire me, I'll be able to get here at six and start work. The salary is fine. Do you want to give me the job or not?"

"How long have you been married?" he repeated.

Andy sighed. "Eleven years."

"But you don't have children."

"No children."

"You have the job," the General said. "Tony? Where are you, Tony?"

"Right here," a voice said behind Andy, starting her.

She turned her head to see that the most beautiful young man in England was leaning on the doorframe. He seemed perfectly at ease under her stare, and Andy understood that he was used to being stared at. He wore a dark blue perfectly tailored suit. He smiled at Andy, straightened up, and walked into the room. She was trying to guess his age when he reached the bed and took the General's hand in his own. This seemed a natural and unaffected gesture of love. He was still smiling at Andy, and his warm dark eyes smiled too.

"Mrs. Rivers, this is my grandson, Tony Leck," the General said.

Andy and the young man nodded at each other. He must have been at least twenty-five, Andy thought, but then Tony looked down at his grandfather, and his face suddenly looked adolescent.

"You'll take Mrs. Rivers to the room where she'll be working," the General said. "See if she needs anything before she starts work tomorrow."

Tony patted his hand, murmured "Of course," and caught Andy's eye as he nodded toward the door.

"Then give her some lunch downstairs," the General said. "I'll be down later, Tony."

"Fine."

Tony followed her out into the hall, gently closing the General's door behind him. His face did not seem made to express earnestness, but earnestness

was its dominant expression. "We rented an electric typewriter for you. Was that all right?"

"Oh, of course," she told him. At this moment, in the dim light of the hallway, Tony Leck appeared to be no more than fifteen.

"That's a relief," he said, and led her through the door to the stairwell. "You never know what people will want to write with, do you? It must be very personal—I mean, there must be people who can't write a word unless they have paper with a certain number of holes down the side. Don't you think?"

They were going down the dusty staircase, and Tony paused to open the door off the second-floor landing. "You'll be here, I'm afraid. I wish it were better, but—we just do the best we can."

Another dusty corridor with a faded carpet. Two doors on one side of the hall; a row of religious pictures facing them from the wall. Tony opened the first door and motioned Andy in.

It was a bare small room with white walls and a bay window. A camp bed with a scratchy-looking brown mattress across it was set in the center of the far wall. On the other side of the room was an ancient blue sofa with carved armrests and claw feet. A muddy rug covered the floor. Precisely in the center of the bay stood a small table of unfinished pine with a small electric typewriter precisely centered upon it. The furniture seemed to have been arranged with the use of a ruler and a T square. "Not much, I'm afraid," Tony said. "But it's fairly clean. I can vouch for that. Hi, pussy."

He knelt to knead the fur of a striped cat who had wandered in. A marmalade tabby, appearing from nowhere, had begun to wind through Andy's legs.

"Lots of rats in Notting Hill," Tony said. "Will this room suit you? There is another one you could have, if . . . you know . . ."

"This is wonderful," Andy said, overstating to answer what seemed his embarrassment. "The cats will keep down the rats, and if I need inspiration I can always pace from the couch to the little bed. Really, it's fine. Thank you for cleaning it for me."

Tony nodded: Andy thought she saw him beginning to blush, very faintly. "Can I ask you a question, Tony?"

"Fire away," he said, smiling again. "Military metaphor."

"You don't have to answer if you don't want, but . . . how old are you?"

He gave her a shy, sly, witty look. "As old as need be."

They ate below ground level, in the kitchen—facing each other across a yellow table with a cracked enamel top. "As old as need be for what?" Andy asked him. Two cats, not the ones from the second floor, twined around Andy's ankles.

## The General's Wife

Tony set a bowl of soup—Brown Windsor, though Andy could not have identified it—before her, then put a tray of crumbly yellow cheese and dense, chewy-looking bread in the middle of the table. He sat down, tore a section of the bread from the loaf, and put some of the cheese on it. "For taking care of my grandfather, of course," he said.

Tony Leck had more poise than any American of his age, whatever that age was, Andy thought.

### 3

That night Andy had a nightmare worse than any since her childhood. She was swimming in heavy, oily saltwater; her arms were exhausted. When she lifted her head out of the water, she saw only night. She forced herself to raise her arm and pull herself a few more feet through the weight of the water. Something slithered past her left leg, then caught; just giving her time to catch a hasty, panicked breath, a coil of seaweed wrapped itself around her legs. Her head slipped beneath the surface. Air escaped her lips and bubbled up. The seaweed around her legs was heavy as an iron chain. Andy bent over in the black water, trying to loosen the weeds before they pulled her all the way to the ocean bottom. Her fingers rasped against tough rubbery stuff—at first too slippery, then too tough, to dislodge. Another thick strand of weed lazily circled her waist; she felt another slap against her neck.

She was going to die—that was certain. The thick heavy weeds pulled and pulled her down. In a second her mouth would open, water would rush in, she would inhale: and then burning painful death would come for her. Thick slimy bands of weed were clutching her waist, and she fell through the dark water like a rock. She screamed—and the scream threw her abruptly into wakefulness before it could leave her throat. Andy disbelievingly saw the ceiling of the Belgravia bedroom, saw the moon sailing past the high divided window. Relief burst in her chest like a bubble; a film of perspiration covered her forehead, her chest, her arms. She lay back against her damp pillow, breathing rapidly. Beside her, Phil slept on—there was comfort even in the fact of his inert body.

Phil had made surprisingly little fuss about Andy's job. He had half-listened to her description of seeing the ad twice, of going to the house in Notting Hill, of her interview—if that was the word—with the General. When she had finished, he had said only, "You won't last long, Andy. I'm just telling you: you won't stay on any job where you have to be at work at six. Not you and not with that guy, either. You know what they used to say about him? They used to say that he ate human flesh once—and that he liked it.

You won't be there two weeks." He had returned to his *Financial Times*, and she had swallowed her fury.

In the morning, tired from her hours-long inability to get back to sleep after awakening from her nightmare, Andy set up the breakfast table for Phil. She herself was too anxious to eat breakfast. Cereal in a bowl, a carton of milk beside it. Bread ready to be inserted in the toaster, a jar of jam and a knife beside the bread. She was moving slowly, trying to think what else Phil might feel like demanding for his breakfast, when he appeared in the kitchen door, looking sourly at his watch. "You don't have time for breakfast," he said. "It's a quarter to six. I knew this was a terrible mistake."

"This is your breakfast, dammit," Andy said. "I wanted—oh, forget it. I have to go."

"That's just what I was trying to point out," he said.

Still angry, Andy finally got out of a taxi on Kensington Park Gardens at six-twenty—it had taken her twenty-two minutes to flag one down. She took from her bag the key Tony Leck had given her and mounted the wide steps and let herself into the musty entry. The house was silent. Was everybody still asleep? Andy went up the staircase to the second floor. In the room she had been given, all was just as it had been yesterday—the typewriter in the middle of the desk in the middle of the room facing the middle of the bay window. She closed that door and continued up to the General's floor.

Andy could hear the old man muttering to himself as soon as she went from the stairwell into the corridor. He was, she knew, railing at her—her first morning on the job, and twenty minutes late! She opened his door and entered, expecting him to point his finger at her and begin shouting. Her stomach was trembling.

But there was no accusing finger, no outraged shout. The smell of melting wax was even stronger in the room than it had been yesterday, as if the candles had been burning all night. Andy saw the empty bed with its gray, unhappy sheets, and then looked toward the impromptu altar. General Leck was kneeling before this, muttering to himself. Andy realized that he was praying, and with such concentration that he had not heard her enter the room. Then she heard a hitch in his muttering voice: he was weeping as he prayed.

She did not know what to do. Should she interrupt him and see if he wanted any help? Suppose he were in pain! She walked nearer to him, and went around to his side so that he would be able to see her with his peripheral vision.

The General was wearing an old blue dressing gown with epaulets and red frogging down the front. His head was nearly on his knees, and his eyes were closed. He was speaking, but she could not under-

**"You know what they used to say about him? They used to say that he ate human flesh once—and that he liked it."**

stand the words. Andy cleared her throat. The General opened his eyes and turned his head to glance at her—his eyes looked red and sore. He waved her away. Andy retreated to wait for General Leck to conclude his prayers.

A short time later he flapped a hand at her, and Andy jumped forward. She put a hand under his elbow, her other hand on his wrist, and levered him up. A smell of age and misery came from the General, a smell of age and woodsmoke from his dressing gown. "Bed," he commanded, and Andy led the snuffling old man toward the horrible bed. He tottered forward until he could lean on the bed with his outstretched arms, then he shuffled up close enough to sit on it. Making a visible effort, the General lifted his legs and got them under the sheet. Then he collapsed backward into his dingy pillows.

"Begin on the papers this morning," he breathed out. "You'll have to read through them all first—that's your first job, girl. Read them. Read every one. Then you'll want to rewrite them and translate the French passages into English. But read them first straight through, beginning to end. They're in my trunk." With great effort, he propped himself on an elbow, and gestured toward a closet door beside the bed. "In there. Mind yourself, now."

Andy opened the door and saw why the General had warned her. Inside the closet, in the midst of several old uniforms on plush hangers and civilian clothes which hung on hooks, a battered green steamer trunk with frayed leather edging sat like a Wodehouse aunt. Rats stared red-eyed at Andy from the top of the trunk, then scurried away to the rear of the closet.

"Mind the rats," the General said.

"Okay," Andy said, her skin crawling. She stepped into the closet. Where she was certain two or three rats had been visible, now only the reproving green trunk looked out at her. She heard a frantic scurrying from within the closet walls. Andy bit down on her objections and pulled the trunk a foot or two toward her across the floor. Hurrying, she opened the trunk and looked down into a confusion of papers, some bundled together in folders and others loose, old newspapers, yellowing photographs. Andy picked up the topmost folder and closed the trunk.

"Fine," the General said. "Take those papers to your room. Now. Please, Mrs. Rivers. You must begin your work."

Andy hovered by the end of his bed, looking at the thin old man with his sunken face and wild white hair. "Can I ask you a question, General Leck?"

The old man opened his eyes.

"Why did you want me? I mean, why an American woman, especially? Wouldn't a retired military man have been more... well, more suitable?"

He slowly shook his head. "I'm a retired military man, Mrs. Rivers. I wanted distance. Wanted to make sure I got all sides in."

"Oh, I see," Andy said.

"But maybe I just wanted you, Mrs. Rivers."

Andy nodded; the General closed his eyes again, and his face settled into what seemed his characteristic expression of sorrowful anger.

After two hours' work, Andy was so bored that she wondered if she could continue this odd project. The earliest pages she had read—had labored over, in fact, working to decipher the General's tiny handwriting—were a pedestrian account of his upbringing. This was as conventional as the General's prose. There had been a military father, several nannies, postings in the Far East, a country house in Northumberland; all described without a trace of wit or nuance. "Redding Hall, our seat in the country, was I believe the usual sort of thing. Large it certainly was, though not ostentatiously so. Quite the bolt-hole it was for my father, who taught me to use a shotgun at Redding Hall in my eighth year." Andy wondered how extensively she was supposed to rewrite this colorless and disorganized stuff. Because of General Leck's importance, his memoirs would probably be publishable; but this sort of material had been better written about in a hundred novels.

Then Andy uncovered a series of pages written in French, and in another handwriting. She cheerfully squared the stack of General Leck's pages and began reading the French matter. Her boredom vanished. The writing was gay and charming, the author involved both in the subject—a childhood in the Paris of the nineteen-twenties—and in the way she described it. Andy began to make notes for her translation. A white cat jumped on her little table, looked her in the eyes, and started to purr.

She worked happily for several hours on the French pages, saw with satisfaction that there were at least fifty more pages of it, and at twelve-thirty went downstairs to see if anyone had thought about lunch.

When she reached the entry she called "Hello?"

She dimly heard Tony answering her. Andy went to the rear of the dusty entry and peered down the staircase to the lowest floor. "I'm here," she heard Tony say. "Come on down. Lunch is almost ready."



## The General's Wife

"Oh, thank goodness," Andy said—she was hungry, but her exclamation was produced chiefly by her relief at finding that meals, if not cleaning, were regular in the Leck household.

The General, dressed in a gray business suit, was already seated at the head of the long narrow table in the center of the kitchen. Bright light filtered in from the windows set high in the walls. The General's hair had been brushed, and his skin looked pink. He glanced up at Andy as she entered the kitchen, then looked down again to where his hands were vaguely fiddling with his silverware—he looked as if he were unsure of its function. Yet the weakness and the fears of the morning were gone.

"Are you enjoying your research?" General Leck asked without looking at her.

"Yes," she said. "Particularly the French pages."

"The French pages," he muttered, fiddling with his knife and fork. "You have no problems with the language—the idioms and so on?"

"No, not yet," she said.

General Leck set down his silverware and subsided into a gloomy repose. He said, "Grump."

Tony came from the stove with two bowls of Brown Windsor soup—this, it seemed, was their daily fare. He set them down on the plates before Andy and his grandfather, took the cheese off the sideboard and placed that in the middle of the long table. After he had put a loaf of bread on the table he served himself and sat at the opposite end of the table from his grandfather.

General Leck was already eating. "The house is a disgrace," he said into the air beside his right elbow.

"Yes, sir," Tony said.

Andy too began to take the soup. Tony still sat with his hands in his lap.

"There are rats in the walls," the General said. "They disturb my sleep."

"Yes, sir," Tony said.

The General looked at Tony for the first time since Andy had come downstairs, and Tony took up his soup spoon. "Yes," said General Leck, and Tony began to eat his soup.

All through lunch, the old man ignored Andy, complaining about the condition of the house and of Notting Hill in general. Tony said little more than *yes, sir*. When the General shoved his plate away, Tony silently rose and went up the length of the table to take his arm. He assisted his grandfather out of the room, and soon Andy heard them toiling up the stairs. She finished the last of her cheese alone.

To help Tony, she collected the dishes and put them in the sink. Randomly she opened a cupboard: here were seven or eight cans of Cross & Blackwell's Brown Windsor Soup. Andy spent a moment wondering if the General ever ate anything else.

And then spent a much longer moment feeling sorry for Tony: he seemed to have no life of his own, to be completely under his grandfather's sway. He had not even been able to eat until his grandfather had nodded at him.

Across the downstairs hall from the kitchen was the room that must have been Tony's. When he was not needed by the General, he seemed to melt behind this door. Andy stood before it, and was surprised by a sudden, strong impulse to open the door and take a look at Tony's room. She lifted her hand and touched the wood; then withdrew her hand. She could not open it, that would be a violation both of Tony's privacy and her own principles. Andy rested her fingers on the wood of the door, then snatched them back. Suppose Tony were to come downstairs and see her caressing the door! Andy did not even want Tony to see her loitering beside his room; she quickly went back upstairs to her own room. Above her in the General's bedroom, all was silent.

### 4

Three hours later, she was still immersed in the pages written in French. These had taken a surprising turn: so surprising, in fact, that Andy wondered if they belonged with the other pages or were a section of an abandoned novel which had been carelessly mixed in with the autobiographical papers. For ten or fifteen pages, the author of the French pages had indulged in a startling vein of eroticism. This was not pornography, there were no descriptions of sexual acts; but the pages glowed with erotic feeling. And this ripeness of erotic feeling shone through without Andy's knowing who were the people involved.

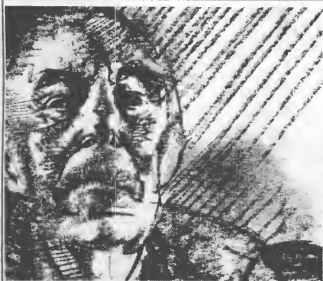
A man and a woman were on board a ship. They felt a simultaneous and instant attraction; they watched each other on the deck, in the dining room. The man was older by some years than the woman, but the younger woman seemed to control the man's progress toward her. A dense, thick ache of sexuality—of sexual obsession—haunted the man's circuit of the ship, either looking for the young woman or looking at her.

They met; they spoke words of no importance but of great meaning. However trivial their conversation, they felt that an event of immense magnitude had taken place.

Then they were in the man's cabin. He was pouring wine; fresh fruit glistened in a bowl on the table before them. And this too, in itself so innocent, was haunted by sexual obsession.

The scene ended inconclusively: the lovers, for that is what they were, had not even touched.

Andy had just reached the end of this scene when she heard her door opening. She stood up as



Tony Leck walked into her room. "Tony?" she said. His jacket was off and his tie was loosened. His eyes were ablaze. "What . . . ?" He walked straight toward her and put his arms around her.

"Tony?" she said again. His mouth was moving on her neck: she embraced him and felt his strength, his leanness. "Oh my God," she said—she knew she was going to go to bed with him, that she wanted to go to bed with him and that in seconds they would be undressing, feverishly, and that seconds later she would feel his skin against hers. She knew that these events were inevitable, and that they would be shatteringly sweet. Her heart raced, her face grew hot.

"Say something," she half-pleaded, but he put his mouth over hers, and she gave herself simply to what was happening to her. A short time later she led him to the little camp bed in her room.

It was the first time since before her marriage that she had made love to anyone but Phil Rivers. She felt as though she had inhaled perfume, or taken some powerfully disorienting drug. Tony Leck's smooth supple white skin smelled like freshly baked bread. Shocked by the suddenness of the intimacy and what seemed its depth, her long-held objections to adultery blew away like smoke.

That night in Belgravia, Phil never noticed any change in Andy—for Andy these changes were so enormous that she thought they must be printed across not only her face but every one of her gestures. But Phil ate dinner, watched the evening news, and leafed through the *Financial Times* without any sign of recognizing that Andy's life, and therefore his, had altered irrevocably. The Riverses undressed (and Andy noticed her breasts for the first time in perhaps ten years, remembering how Tony Leck had held and kissed them), the Riverses got into their bed. "Goo'night," Phil said perfunctorily, taking up a book called *Personal Management*.

And that night Andy again dreamed of being far out in a deep oily sea. Again her arms grew weary and land was nowhere to be seen. Her hopeless efforts at swimming only took her deeper into blackness. Again her head went under, and she swallowed bitter water.

The bands of seaweed closed about her legs and

dragged her into a pocket in the water. Andy curled over, trying to loosen the weeds around her legs, and was caught by drifting snarls of green rope: a hard thin thing scraped her naked back, and she looked over her shoulder and saw a skull floating out of the weeds. The skull bumped against her cheek, the skeleton's arms folded around her. She and the embracing skeleton drifted down and down together, wrapped in the heavy weeds.

5

At five-thirty the next morning, Andy was back in Notting Hill. She let herself into the tall house in Kensington Park Gardens and slowly went up the unlighted stairs. The skylight at the top showed the first traces of light silvering the fat bottoms of the clouds. Andy went into the hallway and hesitated outside General Leck's door.

A noise of slight, even breathing came to her. She thought that he was still asleep—then that downstairs, in his room off the kitchen, Tony was also asleep in his bed.

"Who's there?" the old man's voice said through the door. "Who is that in the hall?"

"It's just me," Andy said. "I got here early today."

"Well, then you'd better come in and start on the papers," the General said. "Come in—don't hang about in the hall."

This morning there was no weeping, no praying. The General was propped upright on his bed in the frogged robe, his hands lying limp and empty at his sides. He glanced coldly at her, then went back to contemplating the dark windows across the room.

"Good morning," Andy said.

"You know where the papers are to be found. Please begin on them, Mrs. Rivers."

"Yes, General," Andy said, and crossed in front of his gaze to get to the closet door.

A half-dozen rats stared angrily at her as she opened the door: a half-dozen fat gray bodies thudded to the closet's wooden floor and slithered into invisibility. Andy felt her heart thump. She felt like slamming the door and shouting—this scene was so clear to her that it was as if it were happening, she had given in to her destructive impulse and already begun shouting—*I love your grandson. I slept with him right under your nose!*

But instead she meekly opened the lid of the steamer trunk and lifted out another armload of papers.

"I trust that you know what you're doing," she heard the General say behind her.

"Excuse me?" Andy managed to keep her voice calm.

She emerged from the closet holding the stack

## The General's Wife

of papers.

"In your work here," the General said with disguised but real impatience. He was not looking at her, but still at the blankness of the bedroom windows. "You know what your work involves, don't you, Mrs. Rivers?"

Andy muttered that she thought so.

Carrying the messy stack of papers, she nodded goodbye to the General (who continued to stare at the dark windows), left his room, and went swiftly down the stairs. She paused only a moment on the second-story landing and then continued down past the entry all the way to the bottom floor. The kitchen was cold and empty. Andy walked up to Tony's door, opened her mouth to pronounce his name—and could not.

She stood before the door, her arms full of paper, for some reason afraid to call his name or to rap on the wood and awaken him. Andy felt almost as though the door itself were threatening her: but the real threat, she knew, was whatever was behind the door. She blinked, fearing that this ultimate unfairness would force her to cry. She could not call on Tony Leck, she could not even touch his bedroom door as she had after the terrible lunch yesterday. Danger lurked nearby, would strike: would strike if this door opened. It was a conviction. General Leck, for it was he who was the danger, somehow lay coiled behind the door. Andy stepped back, opened her mouth again, and again could not speak.

This feeling of definite but unspecified danger drove her back up the stairs to her own room.

On this day, the second of her three in the employ of General Leck, she read pages that he had written about his wife. It was the General's tiny spiky handwriting, but the language was French and the entire spirit of the writing had altered—in French, the General was neither pedestrian nor conventional. He had loved his wife, and in the rhythms of his sentences Andy saw the same sensual and erotic obsession she had seen in the passages she had read yesterday. Those, she had previously decided, had been written by the wife—by Tony's grandmother. General Leck was the older man ensnared by passion on the ocean liner; his wife was the enchanting girl growing up in postwar Paris.

At the bottom of this page, Andy read this sentence in the General's French: *In her arms I was always young, and would be forever.*

6

She tried to go on translating from the General's French, but by eleven o'clock could no longer. She was too aware that downstairs Tony Leck would be working in the kitchen, reading in his room, or perhaps standing at the bottom of the stairs . . . looking up toward the top of the house.

In this house he was imprisoned. If Tony Leck had been an American, Andy considered, he would never have let himself be put into the awful position of being his grandfather's servant—no matter how eminent the grandfather happened to be. But as things were, his own life was a sacrifice to his grandfather's. She could show him a little independence, a little resourcefulness. Tony could not take a step without the General's permission—suppose she were to abduct him, take him right out of the musty Notting Hill house and *prove* to him that he could be free?

Suppose she took him, in fact, back to Belgravia and put him in the guest room?

Andy recognized that this was a particularly impossible fantasy, but the image it brought of Tony Leck looking out of the guest room window was powerful enough to make her feel lightheaded. *In her arms I was always young, and would be forever.* She put down the closely written page in her hands and stood up. Andy went hesitatingly to the door of her bare white room, still unwilling to admit to herself what she was going to do.

She went out into the corridor, then bit down lightly on her lip and went into the stairwell.

Down it went, down into a region of undifferentiated dark—the sunlight from the skylight ended abruptly in the middle of a tread, and below it was murk. Andy moved swiftly and quietly down the stairs; on the ground floor, she circled around to the back of the entry and went down the stairs to the next level.

Andy went across the tiled floor and into the kitchen. She saw Tony as soon as she entered. In an open-necked dress shirt—his jacket and tie were draped over the back of one of the chairs—Tony was standing over the sink; his face looked somehow dazed—lost and empty. A brush stroke of animal blood lay across his cheek; and Andy immediately noticed how strong the smell of blood was in the kitchen. She could not see his hands, but he must have been skinning something.

He looked unblinkingly up at her, and she felt as though all the air had been pushed from her lungs. Irrelevantly, she saw that the air over the sink was thick with flies, which must have come in through one of the open windows set up at ground level. Tony looked down, his eyes out of focus, and distractedly waved the flies off.

She went toward him without making any conscious effort—it was as if she slid across the floor on a greased track. He turned on the taps and rinsed his hands without looking at them, and when he put his arms around her, the backs of his arms were still streaked with blood. Andy only half saw the long pink carcass along the draining board, the heap of purple entrails in the sink. She went to her knees thoughtlessly, her mind spinning; she clutched at his knees.

Above her head she heard Tony saying *I love you*.

"I love you," she said into the soft fabric of his trousers.

Above her head, Tony said, *Forever?*

"Whatever you like," she said. "Oh, my God."

Tony lifted her to her feet; she felt his lips grazing along her cheek. His arms had left symmetrical stripes of blood on the sides of her blouse. Tony turned her around and, holding her tightly by the waist, walked her across the kitchen floor toward the bottom of the staircase.

He opened the door of his room.

"I was afraid to come in here," she said, and saw that it was very much like her own room two floors up—essentially barren. Two spindly chairs sat in the far corners, a newspaper lay on the floor. Pictures torn from magazines had been taped to the walls—she dimly took in pictures of women's faces, tanks, rock musicians, the Robert Capa photograph of a Spanish loyalist struck by a bullet.

Tony pulled her toward the bed. Andy seemed almost to fly out of her clothes—the bloodstained blouse and her skirt to *burn* off her body—her skin so hot, so hating of their constrictions. She clamped herself onto Tony, running her hands over the ridges of muscle on his back, then touching with infinite tenderness the planes and angles of his face. She spread herself out atop his bed, and Tony moaned into her ear as he gently rolled beside her.

And there was that *fact*—that large, red, necessary, rigid but humorous *fact*. Andy circled it with her hands, bruised her mouth against Tony's as it pulsed in her grip, and then bent herself down to hold it in her mouth. She had never done this with Phil, and she wanted Tony to understand the completeness of her acceptance of him. It was uncomfortable in her mouth, soon her jaws would ache, but Tony groaned with stunned ecstatic pleasure, and for a time she kneaded and lapped at it with her lips.

When she lifted her head, Tony clutched her into him and opened her mouth with his tongue. He slipped himself into her, and then his body seemed to advance and advance into her deepest spaces. The confidence of his body! Andy lifted herself up off the bed, pushing herself insistently toward him, as if she were trying to push herself inside out.

They were locked together, they were moving and moving and moving, and Andy felt the entire surface of her body become slick and warm and wet.

Afterward, she may have slept for a minute or two: Tony was still hugely inside her, and she held his taut shoulders and slipped her arms under and around his slim trunk. His eyes were closed, and she closed hers and brought their foreheads together . . .

When she opened her eyes no more than a blink of time had passed, but Andy felt drained, passive.

She saw General Leck sitting across the room



## The General's Wife

on one of the little chairs pushed into the corners. The General wore his business suit and looked at her without expression. Andy felt no shock, seeing the General there: she knew that General Leck had been in the room the entire time she and Tony had been making love, and experienced a dim, faraway shock of surprise at how little she cared. She felt no shame whatsoever. Absentmindedly she stroked Tony's back, which was still damp with sweat.

Tony raised his head and looked at her, then looked over his shoulder at his grandfather. Without a word he left the bed and stepped into his underpants. He dressed mutely, looking only at the floor.

After he had buttoned his sleeves and clasped his belt, Tony went across to his grandfather and helped him stand. He walked his grandfather toward the door; in seconds both of them were gone.

7

The following day, after a sleepless and anxious night, Andy again arrived at the Leck house before six o'clock—she had walked all the way from Belgravia, and it had taken her half an hour. All during the terrible night beside Phil, and all during the long walk through the dim immensities of London, Andy had come to face the realization that she was now incapable of staying away from the Notting Hill house—she had crossed that border without even seeing it flash fatally past her. Her body had decided, or the world had decided for her. If Tony Leck were enslaved to his grandfather, then Andy Rivers was too. Whatever was Tony Leck's condition, that too was Andy Rivers's.

She could, she had realized as she had left her house at five-fifteen in the dark morning, tell the General that she had changed her mind and wanted to stay in the second-floor room after all. It would take Phil days to find her, and by the time he did, he would know that he had lost—lost not only her, but whatever he might have gained earlier by beating her. She could move into the house on Kensington Park Gardens. It was not yet that she *would* but that she *could*. She wanted to keep that possibility, that secret pocket of experience, before her so that she could measure it a while longer.

Andy reached the tall brick house at a quarter to six and let herself in. She expected—almost expected—a spark to jump from the key to the lock, so historical did her opening the house seem on this morning. Andy silently closed the door behind her and looked up the staircase.

The General would be kneeling and weeping before his homemade altar, or sitting up in bed staring out the windows at nothing.

Andy decided. She went to the rear of the entry, passing the only half-visible rows of religious

pictures, and went swiftly down the stairs to the basement.

Down here it was shadowy dark. Andy went over the tiles to Tony's door. For a moment she stood unmoving before it, her lower lip between her teeth. She ran one hand over the flaking paint, then stepped closer to the door and touched her forehead to the wood. She shakily exhaled. Finally she knocked twice, quietly.

"The boy's gone," a voice said behind her.

As humiliated as she had not been yesterday, Andy whirled around. The General was seated just inside the entrance to the kitchen, wearing his suit and a regimental tie with a tight tiny knot. The cords in his neck lapped over his high stiff white collar.

"Gone," Andy said, leaning backwards on the door.

"Just for a couple of hours, girl. Grump! My grandson will be back this afternoon—he was called away in the middle of the night. Grump! And I myself will be going out very shortly. I shall be gone most of the day."

"Fine," she said softly, having chiefly taken in that Tony was not gone for good.

"You might as well go upstairs, girl. You have a lot of work to do. If no one is back here by twelve, feel free to come down and prepare some lunch for yourself."

"Thank you, General," she said, her face still burning.

"I hope I was not in error about you," the General said. "It would be a serious matter if I were. You must be right for us, Mrs. Rivers. Everything depends upon it."

Andrea remembered—remembered with a bitter sharpness—her vision of the General coiled like an ancient serpent behind Tony's door.

Without looking at him, she mounted the stairs. Once she got back up into the entry she saw that dim gray light was beginning to filter down from the skylight. The array of religious pictures on the staircase paneling glowed and whispered as she walked past them to reach the main section of the staircase.

Dozens of pairs of red angry eyes stared at her from the top and sides of the steamer trunk. "Go!" she shouted. "Get out!" She stamped her foot, and one or two of the big rats thudded down onto the floor. Andy advanced a step into the closet: the cluster of rats on top of the trunk flattened down, still angrily glaring at her. "Get out of here!" she yelled, and swept her arms back and forth. One of the rats atop the trunk opened its mouth and hissed at her. She picked up one of the General's heavy shoes and pegged it at the rat—the rat squealed and vanished when the shoe smacked into its side. Andy stepped forward, and her own shoe connected with a fat gray body.

Her fingers caught a tiny square photograph just before it tumbled off the edge of the desk. A young man who resembled Tony, a young woman who was herself. The woman in the photograph had Andy's face.

She screamed with disgust: and then all the rats had vanished back inside the walls, and she bent forward and pulled the trunk half out of the closet. She flipped back the top. Andy had imagined rats streaming from the trunk, but down inside were only several other bound sheafs of paper and a flat box of photographs. She lifted out one of the bundles of paper and then reached back in for the box.

Andy left the trunk extending out of the closet door and dashed out of the room.

Down the stairs, clatter clatter, and into the safety of her own small white room.

Tony, she thought.

Dazed and still breathing hard, she sat at her desk and began to read the new pages.

Something was wrong; something was out of order. She was reading material in sequence with the boring stuff she had read the first day. The General was describing Sandhurst and his military training. Cliché followed cliché, the playing fields of Eton again met the Duke of Wellington, and never was a young man so confident and moralistic and bland, so stout of heart and mushy of head. *I looked forward to my first command post with every proper emotion. I was not a little proudful and every bit as apprehensive.* Andy could not bear to waste her time now reading this kind of thing; she flipped ahead, scanning the pages, looking for a mention of Tony or of the woman who had written the first pages in French.

Finally she came across, in the middle of the bundle, a single page with two sentences written on it in the woman's hand.

*I know why you weep. You weep because I cannot give you children.*

She stared at these sentences. The words seemed almost to writhe on the yellowing page. Andy could see herself writing these bitter words, could feel the depth of self-hatred driving the pen . . .

She flipped the page over and was looking at a sheet written in the General's French—he was describing his wife. It was as if these memories had been unlocked by the two sulphurous sentences on the previous page. *Laurance is radically unstable. She is I mean unstable at root, like a building which must inevitably collapse upon itself.* Andy read with her

mouth open, her attention nailed to the General's phrases—if a bomb had exploded outside on the street, she would not have looked up.

Soon after their marriage, Laurance Leck, the General's French wife, had begun to demonstrate her "radical instability." She wept inconsolably for no reason the General could discern, she became the victim of odd fears and obsessions—she could not cross bridges, she developed a fetish against eating meat of any kind, for a period of three years she refused to go outside the house.

In the nineteen-thirties she became addicted to narcotics; already she was drinking heavily. She had lost her looks. By the time Germany invaded Poland and her husband was preparing for the period of his greatest glory, she required a full-time attendant. In 1944, the General a hero in her native country, she took her own life. The instrument she chose was a heavy, wooden-handled kitchen knife. There had been many wounds.

There the memoir ended.

Andy picked up the box of photographs and turned it out over the side of the desk—the photographs spilled out onto the blond wood beside the typewriter. Her fingers searched through them, flipped them over. Here was young Anthony August Leck as a Sandhurst cadet, his back very straight, his face in the shade; here was the slightly older Anthony August Leck at various ages, holding various ranks, in Malaysia, in Egypt, in France. Her fingers caught a tiny square photograph just before it tumbled off the edge of the desk. A young man who resembled Tony, a young woman who was herself. The woman in the photograph, who was Laurance Leck shortly after her marriage, had Andy's face.

Andy groaned. Her stomach seemed to have fallen out of her body. "Tony?" she heard herself saying, her voice small and lost.

She rifled through the remaining pictures—and there he was, standing beside a sunny wall somewhere in jeans and a short-sleeved shirt, his dark hair rumpled by a breeze. Who was he? If the General had no children he could scarcely have grandchildren. The alertly smiling face in the photograph gave no answers. Andy again found herself staring at the little square in which her own double delicately held the arm of a professional soldier, a husband.

Confused and feeling almost close to panic, Andy stood up and said, "Tony?" She wandered out of the room and went across to the stairwell. Down, down, she floated, thinking that she heard him at work in the kitchen.

But that noise sounded less like Tony as she descended the last leg of the staircase, and more like a hive of bees. It was a rhythmic, steady buzzing—a drugged, hypnotic sound of intense feeding. "Tony!" Andy screamed as she reached the bottom step, but

# The General's Wife

could barely hear her own voice. She went toward the kitchen entrance, and then stopped in fear and disgust. The stench of blood filled the kitchen, and clouds of flies covered the ceiling, the little windows above the surface of the ground, the long narrow table. The flies were most numerous near the sink and the gas range, where they were nearly a solid black wall. It was from this wall of flies that the drugged rhythmic buzz of feeding came. "Tony?" Andy whimpered, and then ran back up the stairs.

She opened every door downstairs, peered into rooms with marble fireplaces but no furniture, rooms thickly coated with dust. Tony was nowhere on the ground floor. She ran upstairs and looked into every other room off her corridor and found more dead empty space—chill small boxes with even less in them than her sparsely furnished cell. The noises of the millions of flies downstairs rose and fell, rose and fell—it was the noise of a pure and mindless greed.

Andy went to the window of one of these empty rooms at the rear of the house and looked out at the tiny pie-shaped garden, thinking that her lover might be outside. Tony was nowhere on the yellow grass, he did not loiter near the exploded-looking roses. In the middle of the little lawn, the cats were boiling over something Andy could not identify. A dozen cats, fifteen? They had trapped something and killed it, and now were fighting over it, tearing at it with their sharp milky teeth . . .

Andy turned away when the sound of the flies sang up the stairwell.

She ran up to the top of the house and threw open the General's door. And there he was. Tony lay back on the General's gray and wrinkled sheets, his head propped on the General's pillow. He looked deathly—that was her first thought, that he was dying, and she connected her stricken-looking lover with whatever poor beast the cats were tearing to shreds downstairs in the garden.

"Tony," she exhaled, "when did you get back? What happened to you—why are you . . .?"

Tony pushed back the sheet covering his trunk and Andy saw suddenly that the sheet was red, not gray, it was wet and red . . . Tony's chest was opened up. The ribs had been savagely broken and she could look down into him and see his terrified heart thudding and thudding as more and more blood poured out of him onto the soaked bed . . .

But that could not have been, that had been some kind of mental double exposure suggested—imposed upon her—by the flies in the kitchen and the savage cats outside, for his chest was white and slim, whole, and he was reaching up for her, saying her name. *Andy. Please, Andy.* She kicked off her shoes and climbed in beside him. *I need you, Andy.* He was fumbling with her buttons . . . *Please, Andy.* She pulled off her blouse, not caring if the buttons broke,

and threw it to the floor, feeling his cool skin against her. *Oh, Andy. I'm tired. I'm so tired, love.* She held his limp body close, pressing his shoulders into her, pushing his smooth buttocks in with her other hand: this body was as manipulatable as a doll's, and he seemed to weigh nothing.

Then that mental double exposure happened again, and when her mouth covered his, as if she were trying to breathe life back into him, she was gagging on a thick flow of blood, her hands and arms were wet, and the broken bones of Tony's chest were digging painfully into her chest . . . *lost . . .* his penis folded against her thigh, small and cold; his arms draped lifelessly around her and the blood had ceased to move out of his body . . .

She pulled her head back, unable even to scream. Tony's neck drooped, and his uncaring head bumped her cheek, and his blood ran from her mouth.

But then he was making love to her and there was no blood, no sharp digging shreds of bone.

"Tony," she said. The arms about her held her weakly, and the thin body covering hers trembled. The smell of age, not of blood, surrounded her. Inside her, a puny orgasm died. A voice not Tony's whispered, "*Aaaagh.*" The thin body over hers convulsed.

Andy thrust the shaking body away from her and was looking into the General's face. His eyes were filming, his hands clutched at his chest. Andy screamed, for an instant smelling the sea of blood which had covered her and hearing the drumming greedy sound of flies, then thrust her fist in her mouth and scrambled off the bed. The General's hands flew to his throat; Andy sobbed, blindly struggled into her skirt and clasped the blouse around her shoulders and ran from the upper room.

She never knew if General Leck was already dead when she ran down the concrete steps to Kensington Park Gardens. She was buttoning the two remaining buttons on her blouse, and a taxi slowed beside her. She waved frantically at the driver, then wrenched open the rear door even before he had stopped the cab.

The driver twisted around on his seat, took a good look at her, and said, "Police station, Miss?"

"Home," she said. "Home. Chester Square, east of Eccleston Street, please. Just take me home."

"In a bleedin' great rush too, if you ask me," the driver said, and tore away down Ladbroke Grove.

Four days later Andy read General Anthony August Leck's obituary in the *Guardian*. Death was due to "natural causes," the body had been discovered by a man from the gas company who had come to read the meter. Phil never asked her why she had quit her job or if she intended to get another—he merely retreated another fifty feet into the frigid heartland of their marriage. **W**

# FRONTIERS

by Kit Reed

IT WAS JUST LIKE THE OLD WEST: THE PRAIRIE, THE SETTLERS, AND THE HOMESTEAD. THE ONLY THINGS MISSING WERE THE SAVAGES.

Every time he left home, Gunnar Morgan had the same misgivings. As he kissed Anne and the twins goodbye he was visited by all the farewell scenes in all those old Westerns: the settler kissing the wife and young ones and going off to town only to come back and find the homestead flattened, with an Indian spear planted in the wreckage and some child's rag doll abandoned next to a naked, charred ribcage still smoking in the ruins. The settler would weep over the remains in the full knowledge that in such circumstances the dead were always better off than the ones that were captured. In the movies the settler always seemed surprised, while Gunnar and the rest of the audience knew ahead of time, from the moment at which they parted. Now that he had a family of his own, Gunnar thought perhaps the settler had known too, but in the frontier society there were times when a man had to go ahead and do that which needed doing.

Still, he held Anne too tight at the last moment; she must have guessed at some of it because she ran her hands behind her back and took his hands firmly, helping him to release her. "Gunnar, don't worry."

"Alone out here. One woman alone, with nobody but a couple of children."

"The sooner you go, the sooner you'll be back." Why did that sound so familiar? Troubled by echoes, he said, "It's so wild out here, I just hate to leave you."

"I don't care. I like it."

He looked at the glint in her eyes and thought perhaps she did. "Take care of yourself."

She lifted her head. "I always do." She seemed compelled to add: "The girls like it too."

"Oh Anne, please be careful."

"Don't worry, there's nothing out here."

"Still . . ." What was he afraid of, really?

"Gunnar, go!" She was about to lose her temper. It was hard, he supposed, all of them shut in here with no place to go and no place to be alone. These days he and Anne grappled over the smallest issues, sawing back and forth over each petty decision. At the end she always smiled and deferred to him, saying, "After all, you're the boss here." In another circumstance she would be boss and they both knew it. He blamed himself for these clashes; it was his fault that they were stuck out here. He put her lapses down to cabin fever.

The twins were hanging on his waist. "Bring us a present from Flagstaff, Daddy."

Reluctant to let go of Anne's fingers, he looked





down at them: Jenna, who moved like a willow whip, and practical little Betsy. "What do you want me to bring you?"

Betsy said, "A book I haven't read."

Jenna's face blossomed. "Anything, just as long as it's pretty."

"I never should have brought you to this godforsaken place," he said over their heads. "You should have friends, you should be going to exciting places."

Anne lifted her head with an odd smile. "This will have to do for the time being." She was helping him to leave. "I need you to go now, we're running out of everything. And if you can find that fabric I've been waiting for, it will make all the difference."

"Oh Anne." His voice failed him.

"Hurry. When you get back, we'll have a party."

"I love you, Anne."

"I know it."

She'll be all right, he told himself, riding out. This is a different story altogether. He waited outside the dome until she had secured the airlock. Now nothing could get in or out, and as far as he knew, nothing moved in the vast, dead lands outside it. Anne had sidearms and emergency beepers in addition to the laser cannon, but his heart contracted every time he had to go away and he would walk with his jaw taut and his shoulders high until he came riding back over the last ridge and saw her standing next to the airlock, waving to him through the dome's tough, transparent surface.

He had to go to Flagstaff to pick up supplies and a new chip for his communicator because the thing kept missing digits, which meant he also had to deliver the month's observations to the government office in person. Before the cataclysm everything was easier; computer systems were reliable and they could be checked and augmented by voice transmission. After the failure of Fail-Safe, and the cataclysm, a great many things simply stopped working. Even now, with civilization more or less reassembled, they were still not working. Gunnar felt badly about this but, he thought, he owed his job to the disaster. How would he keep Anne and the twins without it? They lived in comfort in the dome, maintaining one of the outposts Gunnar had established. It was Gunnar's job to collect data because somebody in Washington reasoned that if the air ever cleared, it would happen first in the remote areas. How long would it take? Would it ever happen? Gunnar did not know; he only knew that he had to go on as if this would happen because, when there is no choice, hoping is always better than not hoping.

Flagstaff depressed him. It was crowded and ugly under the enormous dome, with too many people

clogging the passages, all looking gaunt and frantic.

It always took him a week to finish his business, not because he had that much to do, but because of the lines at the government offices. He shaved the time a little by sleeping in the waiting room instead of paying someone to hold his place at night, but he tossed restlessly, and when he did sleep he dreamed of painted savages swarming over the ramparts in enormous numbers. At the supply depot he could not find half the things Anne had asked for. There were flawed fabrics, meat tinned in spite of the maggots, weevilly flour. He did the best he could, knowing that, whatever he brought, Anne would pretend to be delighted. Then she would take it and transform it as she had the outpost, making pretty little curtains and tablecloths, constructing beautiful dinners out of the meanest ingredients.



h, Anne. He had robbed her of her job and her society; they both pretended she could sell her designs from the outpost and if she could not—well, he was going to figure out some way for her to get them to the fashion center. Until he did, it was important for him to encourage her to keep working and for both of them to pretend this was somehow possible. He bought her a piece of artificial turquoise and picked up some candy for the twins and, as an afterthought, a bit of colored glass for Jenna. Then he headed out across the darkening badlands, already imagining what Anne would have prepared for the homecoming dinner, what he would say when the twins swamped him with the drawings they had made to surprise him. In the ruined world he fixed on the life at home, which he had wrought with his bare hands and which would be going on as always, waiting for him to walk back into it. Once he had shut himself in and sealed the airlock, he could believe the world was at rights because, inside the dome, he and Anne tried to make the life they wanted.

Leaving Flagstaff, he thought the color of the sky had altered in the week he had been there. He was certain the air was denser. Sunset bloodied the desert and as the broken shells of buildings outside the dome gave way to broken rock shapes and ruined mesas, shadows fell like knifeblades across the path Gunnar traveled. Once he thought he saw something moving and he kicked the air cushion on the scooter a little higher and checked the shield. He told himself this was routine; after all, these were contaminated lands and he needed to protect himself, but he was running the scooter too fast and he understood that there was more. He had the idea that something had changed, there were strange forces stirring. What was the matter? Just nerves, he told himself: too many days away from the family, but that did not explain it. He could not say exactly what he feared, only that he

**She must have run out  
in a hurry. Their suits  
were still hanging  
by the airlock  
and they were good  
only for short distances.  
He would have found  
their bodies within  
a few feet of the dome.**

feared it. He would not feel easy until he had ridden up over the last rise and could see Anne under the lights inside the airlock, waving. It was near dawn by the time he made the approach, and as the sky began to pale he started in alarm and jerked around to look at the long ridge off to his right. In the flash before he turned and saw nothing, he had imagined he saw this: a frieze of people naked as the figures on a Greek urn, streaming over the crest and away from him.

Coming downhill, he was relieved to see the dome exactly as he had left it. There were Anne's plants in hanging baskets, just inside the airlock; the emission tube was steaming, which meant that she was preparing his homecoming dinner in spite of the hour. He strained to see her and when he did not, he thought she must be in the house, releasing the catch for the decontamination hangar. He gunned the scooter inside, started the process, and waited until the gauges told him it was safe.

Everything was as he had left it. Anne's little garden was flourishing under the artificial light; she had picked tomatoes for the homecoming meal and left them in the grass. He was surprised to see the knife stuck into the earth next to them; usually she was not so careless. He picked up the basket and went to the house, calling, "Anne, I'm home."

When she did not answer, he thought she must be in the bathroom; the rotten supplies made them sick more often than they would have admitted.

"Anne," he said a little louder. "Are you all right?"

He imagined he heard her answer.

"I brought in the tomatoes."

The sound turned out to be the kettle whistling in the neat little kitchen. The sauce was just beginning to burn off the cutlets she had been making. He turned off the stove and went down the hall.

"Anne, are you in there?"

The bathroom turned out to be empty.

"All right, if you're hiding, I give up."

Nobody answered and nobody came.

"Game's over, okay?"

He went into the twins' room. Jenna's bed had not been slept in. She was like a little spook sometimes, flitting around the dome in the middle of the night; they would find her asleep in the garden

the next morning. Betsy had been in her bed not five minutes ago; there was the dent her head left in the pillow. He put his face in it, smelling the young girl smell of soap and musk and candy. It was still warm.

"Come on, dammit, everybody."

He was tired, it did not seem like a good game; they weren't in the house, and he searched the garden in growing exasperation. They would have to lie flat in the synthetic earth to elude him and yet he could not see anybody. He searched the house from the gable to the crawlspace underneath. In a panic, he made certain Anne's clothes were where she had left them. If she ran away, where would she go anyway, and how would she get out? There was not another scooter between here and Flagstaff. Mourning, he went into the kitchen. In addition to the cutlets, Anne had been making a dessert and a bowl of cream substitute; the cream mixture was still frothing. She must have run out in a hurry. Run out. She couldn't. Their suits were still hanging by the airlock and they were good only for short distances. He would have found their bodies within a few feet of the dome.

"Oh, Anne! Is it something I did?"

His voice tore through the silence in the dome, but all he heard was the reverberation, circling and coming back to mock him.

He had not really expected an answer.

Frantic, he inserted the new chip and punched an emergency message into the console. FAMILY MISSING. UNEXPLAINED. All he got back was the usual: MESSAGE BEING PROCESSED. It would be days before they got back to him. He got in the scooter and began sweeping the surrounding wastelands in widening circles, not because he thought he would find them alive, even if he did find them, but because a portion of his life had been stolen and he would not feel right until he could restore it. Circling hopelessly, he called them by name, not because he imagined they would hear him through the shield or across the terrifying distances, but because he could imagine they were still his at least for as long as he kept calling them. By the time he gave up altogether, which was not for several weeks, he had covered hundreds of miles, ranging wide in spite of his fears, the sinister shadows and crevices in the empty, blasted lands.

Finally the terminal acknowledged his first transmission:

ABSENCE UNEXPLAINED.

He sent back: PLEASE EXPLAIN IT.

DON'T WORRY.

EXPLAIN. He tapped out this last in growing impatience. The exchange had taken several weeks and when he returned from his last foray the terminal was displaying what would turn out to be the last message on the subject.

THIS KIND OF THING HAPPENS ALL THE TIME.

"Like hell it does!"

It was almost more than he could bear, he thought, and he tapped in his last response: BUT THEY LOVED ME.

Preparing for yet another sweep, he stopped suddenly in the middle of filling his pack with provisions. He was riveted by Anne's cutlets, petrifying in their sauce. The mold growing on the abandoned cream substitute filled him with sadness, and then anger. *Damned if I'll eat her food*, he thought, *not until I've had an explanation.*

Whose fault was this, anyway—his, for leaving them alone, or hers, for being careless? What were the last things they'd said to each other? He scoured his memory, trying to remember her exact tone the last time he saw her. What was it? Love, or exasperation? If the latter, whose fault was it—his, for bringing her out here to this awful place, or hers, for losing faith? Should he have loved her better or was it her fault, for not loving him, or was it out of their hands altogether?

It came to him in a flash. *This is not my fault. It is beyond my power.*

He would settle in here, and try to reconcile himself. In the next second, of course, his mouth went dry and his heart thudded to a stop: *My God, what if somebody out there stole her?*

KIDNAPPERS? He tapped it into the console.

IMPOSSIBLE. It took a week for this response to come; a week in which he reluctantly disposed of the last meal Anne had cooked for him, and began setting the house to rights. The letters formed: ENVIRONS UNINHABITABLE.

UNINHABITABLE REALLY?

The machine corrected itself. UNINHABITED.

"Then this is all her fault. Hers," he said aloud, although at the moment he could not have said whether or how this followed.

Now that he had the house shipshape, he gave up looking for them, on the premise that the next move was not his, but hers. Once he had begun keeping up the place and performing his duties in a regular way, he found himself immeasurably comforted by routine and gave himself to the solace of ritual. He did not know what he was going to do without his wife and children, but at the same time he found he had plenty to do: there were the observations to record and transmit; he had to keep the place tidy; he needed to plan and make and clean up after meals, he had to exercise. He occupied almost all of their king-size bed now, sleeping spread-eagled, and he told himself again and again that this was wonderful—the peace and quiet.

Then why did he find himself standing under the dome in the middle of the night, waking from a sound sleep to find himself drenched with sweat and

screaming at the red-rimmed moon: "You bitch, how could you do this to me?"

When it was time to make another run to Flagstaff, he secured the dome as best he could and got in the scooter with a premonitory chill, as if at strange footsteps approaching. He shook it off and kicked the scooter into high, running quickly into the city. When he got back this time, with his scooter laden with supplies, he thought at first that nothing had been disturbed. Everything in the dome seemed right but not quite right; it took him several hours to locate the difference. All the presents he had brought in after the last trip, and abandoned in a corner of the twins' room, were missing.

He woke before dawn with a roaring in his ears and his insides trembling. He ran out and battered like a moth against the inside of the dome, plastering himself against the transparent surface. In the next fevered seconds he either did or did not see a wild procession peeling off from a circle in the desert; he could not be certain, because they were already at the top of the ridge, pouring over the horizon; even if he did see this, he could not know whether it was illusion or whether that was really Anne with hair flying and naked breasts gleaming in the poisoned air, running along with them. He threw himself onto the scooter and hurtled out, cursing the seconds it took to move through the ejection stages. Delayed as he was, he knew if there was anything out there he would catch up with it in a matter of seconds. By the time he came over the ridge, there was no moving and no trace of anything.

"Oh Anne!" he shouted to the deadlands.

Then he thought: *It's your fault I'm going crazy.*

What would he do if he did come upon her, cowering in the rubble? He did not know.

He searched for a long time.

That night he slept without dreams, and when he woke he was weeping.

After that, he got hold of himself. He added several new elements to his routine—the late-morning coffee, the afternoon drink. He liked being alone, he thought. He had always liked it.

If this was true, then what was the matter with him? He found himself pressed against the dome at odd hours, staring into the night without being sure how he got there. Once he thought he saw somebody staring in—a naked man, the color of the red sand; he thought he saw other naked people standing in the shadows behind him. Another time he imagined he saw Anne and the twins, and another time, the naked man with Anne at his shoulder.

In the morning everything always looked more or less the same, and by the time Gunnar had finished his morning rounds, the fevered visions would have faded.



Still, one night when a sudden wind swept away most of the haze, he saw them again and this time he was certain the savage, if that was what it was, had something bright on a thong at its throat, and touched it just before it laughed and vanished: the turquoise he had brought Anne from Flagstaff.

*Damn you, Anne! Damn you anyway.*

He knew he could not have seen this because nothing could live out there. Still he hardened his heart against her.

Then when he least expected it, he was waked by her calling.

*Gunnar, Gunnar, please.*

He sat up in bed, certain he had been dreaming. He sat in the dark with his eyes wide and his jaws open as if that would help him hear better.

The dome reverberated with her pounding. *Please, Gunnar.*

"Go to hell," he said aloud, and then covered his head with pillows. She had put him through too much; she was gone forever; he could live with that. Still he could hear the drumming. He reached for the sleeping capsule he always kept next to the bed and crunched it between his teeth.

When he woke it was still night; the sky outside was touched with beginning light and Anne, if it was Anne, was still out there.

He ran outside. It was her, or somebody who looked just like her, splendidly naked, pressing herself against the dome and calling.

*"Go away."*

Did she answer? *Oh Gunnar, please let me in.*

*"I can't, you're dead."*

*Not dead. Changed.*

*"Oh Anne, why did you leave me?"*

*I didn't leave you, I was taken.*

The thought shook him with rage. "You don't love me."

She threw her hands in the air. *I couldn't*

*help it.*

*"Now I suppose you want to come back."*

*Oh Gunnar, please. I want to come home. We all do.* The twins came out of the murk and stood next to her, taller, beginning to be women.

*"Where were you? Where were you all this time?"*

*Oh Gunnar, it doesn't matter.*

He was torn; caution and resentment pulled him one way, desire the other. "If you loved me, you never would have gone."

*We couldn't help it. Really. Please let us in.*

He said, "I can't," but his hands were already pressed against hers, separated only by the dome's glassy surface. He was thinking about the apparitions in the night: the savage with the flash of turquoise at the throat; he was thinking about what she and the savage would have done and he was both enraged and maddened. "This is impossible. Everything outside is poison."

*That's what you think.*

*"The air is poison."*

*That's only what you think.* She danced back a few steps and shook herself.

*"You must be poison."*

She threw back her head and lifted her arms.

*Do I look poison?*

He cried out, putting all the loss and frustration of the last months into his voice: "What were you doing all this time?"

*Don't make me stand out here begging.* Then she added that which he needed to hear to make what came next possible. *I love you.*

He thought he knew what he was letting into the dome: doubt and anger, along with whatever contamination their bodies would have collected, but Gunnar found himself moving toward the airlock in spite of himself, passing trembling hands over the dials and switches that would open it to her, and as he did so he could feel his throat close and his body quicken with a sweet, wild desire.

He hesitated.

This might be a trick.

She might be trying to destroy him.

He realized it didn't really matter.

She was back, enhanced by her absence and whatever had happened to her in it and he knew he would have her.

"I love you too," he said and threw the last switch. The last seal opened and she came in to him, and even as he held out his arms and Anne walked into them without apology or explanation, he could see the twins tumbling in behind her, could see the crazed look in Betsy's eyes, which were all whites, the fact that Jenna's teeth were bared; in the second before he buried his face in Anne's neck he saw lodged in Jenna's dense hair the jawbone of some long-dead small animal, two brightly colored feathers. **17**



# Front-Row Seats at the *Creepshow*

by Ed Naha

THANKS TO GEORGE ROMERO AND STEPHEN KING, THE LURID WORLD OF HORROR COMICS IS ABOUT TO BECOME A COMIC HORROR FILM.

When his fans last left George Romero, the talented director was filming a new chapter of the Arthurian legend in his modern-day romance *Knightriders*. But these days Romero is about as far removed from chivalry as one can get; he is sitting in a Pennsylvania editing room, putting the finishing touches on a celluloid short story wherein actor Fritz Weaver is terrorized by a large, hairy monster housed inside a battered packing crate.

That strange little interlude is one-fifth of Romero's next film, *Creepshow*, a horror anthology due this summer that promises to be as frantic as it is frightening.

"A lot of people were surprised at my doing this right after *Knightriders*," says Romero, smiling broadly. "George, where did you go wrong?" He chuckles. "I guess I went wrong right after meeting Stephen King. Steve and I have been talking about doing this movie for a long time. As a matter of fact, I think we dreamed it up the very first time we met."

When *Creepshow* is finally unleashed, it's bound to raise quite a few eyebrows, from Romero's boosters as well as his critics. Written by novelist King (his first produced screenplay),

the film is a major departure for Romero, best known for such low-budgeted splatter-shockers as *Night of the Living Dead*, *Dawn of the Dead*, and *Martin*. For the first time in his career, Romero was given a decent budget (eight million dollars) and a cast of well-respected actors, including Weaver, E. G. Marshall, Carrie Nye, Viveca Lindfors, Adrienne Barbeau, Leslie Nielsen, and Hal Holbrook (as well as the Romero clan's fastest-rising young star, Stephen King himself, fresh from the success of his beer-swilling scenes in *Knightriders*).

Although a straight-out horror film, *Creepshow* is patterned after a typical 1950s monster comic, with gore toned down in favor of fantasy, fast action, and frequent scares. The visual approach is stylized, with some scenes actually framed like comic-strip panels.

The movie opens with an irate parent throwing a young boy's premier issue of a swell new horror comic, *Creepshow*, out the window. At that point, a specter-like "host" materializes, flipping through the pages of the magazine. Each page comes to life, introducing a new cinematic story with every turn: a family cringes through a fractured

Father's Day when long-dead Daddy decides to come a'calling; a dimwitted farmer splits open a red-hot meteor to discover a green slime within—space goop that happily adheres to and grows on anything . . . or anybody; a janitor breaks into a crate marked *Arctic Expedition 1884* and unleashes a long-maned monster with maniacal manners; a spurned husband buries his cheating wife and her lover up to their necks on a beachfront and prepares to watch the tide come in on closed-circuit tv; and a cranky millionaire discovers himself trapped inside his apartment by a horde of equally cantankerous cockroaches.

"It's hard to say how my fans will react to this movie," says Romero. "It's certainly not something people will expect from me. It's a very, very traditional horror movie—frightening but funny. There are eight or nine instances in it where the audience should jump three feet in the air. The film is comic book-ish, but it's not a send-up. It's played very straightforward. The humor is inherent in the situations."

Although *Creepshow* had its origins in Romero's initial meeting with King a few years ago, the project did not actually shamble to life until

At left: George Romero and Stephen King on location. Says King: "We're going to have a very strange cross-section of people seeing this movie. We'll have my fans, George's fans, and monster fans. I'm also trying to pull in people who love Rex the Wonder Dog."

mid-1980. "It was conceived in a very casual way," Romero recalls. "Steve and I met and kicked around a few ideas. He said, 'Give me a couple of months and I'll write you a movie.' Sure. Fine. That's exactly what he did."

King picks up the story at this point. "I didn't write this movie with my serious hat on," he explains. "I wrote it at night. I never do anything really serious at night. Night is when I play. Anything I do at night comes out that way. You can always tell that I'm having a lot of fun and not working super hard."

Once the script by King was in hand, Romero had little problem raising money. He then assembled his crew. Among the best known were makeup wizard Tom Savini (*Friday the 13th*, *Dawn of the Dead*) and production designer/scenic special-effects supervisor Cletus Anderson. Anderson, best known for such tv work as PBS's *National Geographic* specials, *Leatherstocking Tales*, and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, as well as *KnightRiders*, was asked to create major miracles on a minor budget, transforming the film's Pennsylvania and New Jersey locations into imaginative comic-book settings.

"I'd never done a horror movie before," says Anderson, a professor at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh. "It was quite a shock. I suppose our biggest challenge was creating the green vegetation for the Jordy Verrill story. It starts out as ooze from a meteor and winds up being the entire interior of farmer Jordy's home."

"Making the shrub stuff was tough. We wound up using a combination of elements—everything from tampa grass to weeds to dry grass that we treated with latex. Making things even more amusing was the fact that I'm allergic to all this stuff. I took shots and medication so the work would be bearable."

"We also had to make the stuff grow on camera—have it sprout out of phones and from beneath chairs and tables. I can't tell you the amount of experimentation we had to go



Fritz Weaver plays a college professor called in to investigate when a janitor discovers a crate from a century-old polar expedition—and then mysteriously disappears.

through. We were lucky that the stories were done in comic-book style. That gave our 'reality' a broader base."

Although he's back teaching full time these days, Anderson is still not over *Creepshow*. "I'd find myself working on a graveyard set for the walking dead thinking, 'How did I get into this?'"

"At one point, I had to make up an actress's head as a birthday cake. Having this young lady sit there while we frosted her head and did cake decorations all over it struck me as a bit bizarre. We had to treat her head like an inanimate object."

With crew assembled and locations scouted and agreed upon, Romero set out to find a suitable cast. At that point, the first of a series of seemingly magical events occurred:

some of the most respected character actors in American film began fighting for a spot in *Creepshow*.

"I couldn't understand it," says Romero. "At first I was dumbfounded. Later I was scared."

Among those who wanted in was Fritz Weaver. "Do you know why?" asks the actor, eyes twinkling with obvious glee. "Because it was a George Romero film. Everyone who has seen one of his movies wants to work with him. I was ready to do it before I read the script. George is a magical figure to many of us."

"I think a lot of that stems from his allegiance to Pittsburgh. People in Hollywood are incredibly curious about him. Studios just can't understand a person who keeps his skirts clean of Hollywood, who enjoys his independence and actively loves his



In the same episode, Hal Holbrook is a mild-mannered husband who dreams of murdering his loudmouthed, shrewish wife, played by Adrienne Barbeau.

# Creepshow

work. I was working in L.A. shortly after completing *Creepshow*, and when the studio boys found out what I had just appeared in, they wouldn't leave me alone. 'Romero? What's he like? What's the matter with the guy? Why does he stay out there? We tried to get him and he said no!' They all know that he's good. They want to lure him out there and make him like themselves. But he won't go. He's very bright that way.

"I had to do this movie," Weaver concludes. "George's films have always had an amazing density to them. You never expect that in a horror film."

Romero personally cast his gallery of stars. "I was a little intimidated by the actors when I first started," Romero says candidly. "That got in my way. I couldn't communicate. Then something totally unexpected happened. I realized that the whole cast was behind this project. I started to have a really great time. In fact, *everybody* started having fun. I'm still in contact with many of the actors. They had so much fun that they check in every so often to see how the picture is going.

"I was petrified about people like E. G. Marshall cooperating on their makeup stunts. Tom Savini had to make a full head and chest cast of this very dignified man. Marshall had to put up with a lot of tedious, horrible stuff. He was buried in plaster for



Director Romero confers with actress Adrienne Barbeau on location. In the finished film, Barbeau has a close encounter of the horrific kind when she is introduced to a crate with a monster inside.

hours, but he wound up joking about it.

"Before I knew it, we had a real team working. The actors could see how much this movie meant to us. We were stretching our dollars, getting the most for our money, working insane hours. I mean, we built sets for a third of what they'd cost in Hollywood. I think our cast could sense this devotion and fell right into the spirit of things. They delivered above and beyond."

All of Romero's actors (amazingly enough) agree with the director on that point. Recounts Viveca Lindfors: "I went to the first day's shooting and sat there thinking, 'Come on, now, Viveca. You were classically trained! You've done *Lorca!* Shakespeare! What the hell are you doing in Pittsburgh making a horror movie?' Then we started filming. I said to Romero, 'Do you mind if I improvise a bit? Add a few touches to my character?' He said, 'Viveca, film is cheap. I'll keep the cameras rolling and you go to work.' He didn't have to say that a second time. Whee! That was terrific! It was one of the best working experiences I've ever had in my life. I find myself missing that type of atmosphere now."

"The whole atmosphere around Romero's studio is amazing," echoes Weaver. "It's like they've never heard of Hollywood. They're not weighted down by all that conventional Hollywood thinking and deification of position. They're like a bunch of enthusiastic kids. It's like being in a school where everyone loves their work. That spirit breeds creativity."

"Stephen King amazed me," continued Weaver. "Hal Holbrook, Adrienne Barbeau, and I had a reading with Stephen and George. Everyone contributed suggestions, and Stephen was very receptive to them. He didn't feel threatened.

"He also works faster than



E.G. Marshall plays a cranky millionaire, trapped in his apartment during a blackout, who discovers that the place is inhabited by an army of cockroaches.





Stephen King gets back to nature as hayseed Jordy Verrill. Finding a meteor on his property, money-hungry Jordy decides to smash it and sell the fragments. Unfortunately, the contents of the meteor grow attached to Verrill in a big way.

anyone I've ever seen. On the night before a crucial scene, he called me in for a chat. As we talked about a few changes, he sat at his typewriter and started pecking away. At the end of our conversation, he handed me the revised scene, with all the dialogue changes we had talked about.

"George was also great in terms of creative freedom. I had no idea, for instance, what Savini's monster looked like. Before the scene where I meet the creature in the crate for the first time, I said to George, 'I don't want to see the monster until the cameras are rolling.'"

"George's eyes lit up when he heard that. He knew I wanted to react honestly to the thing. So I turned my back when they rigged the crate. When George yelled 'action,' I spun around and this huge head popped out of the box. It was truly monstrous. My direction called for me to stagger backwards about six feet, hit a wall, and slump down. I tell you, I don't even remember doing it, although it's all on film. It came *very* instinctively.

"The monster was so real that it was easy to work with. Whenever I had to react to it for a close-up, I asked George to put the mock-up of the creature off camera so I could stare at it. It was horrifying. It was disgusting. I loved it!"

Stephen King, who was on the set most of the time ("I want to direct some day, so I thought it would be

good training," he says), was also aware that the making of *Creepshow* was a very special event. "Sheer harmony," he marvels. "There were no egos involved. George runs a low-key set. The actors reacted like kids at Disneyland. Everyone enjoyed themselves tremendously.

"I loved Leslie Nielsen. He was totally insane. He had a little fart machine that he'd set off at strange moments. He'd be in the bedroom set during a sequence when the dead are

creeping up on him. He's supposed to be very paranoid. There's total silence. He's waiting ... watching ... His eyes are darting to and fro. Of course, he had this machine secreted under his bathrobe. All at once the room is wracked by this enormous 'Pphhhfffff-ttt!' The crew collapses in laughter. Nielsen sits there pretending not to know what's going on. He set it off once when he and George were scouting a location for a parking garage, too. A fat man and his son



Part of the Jordy Verrill set designed by Cletus Anderson. Built in an abandoned field near an airstrip in Pennsylvania, the realistic set caused several low flying pilots in the area to think they were heading in the wrong direction.



Elizabeth Regan is Cass Grantham, part of a fractured family in the spooky Father's Day tale. Note the lack of background behind the actress. Director Romero framed many of his shots in this sparse manner to emulate the simplistic style of a comic book close-up.

walked by. 'Pshhhfffftt!' The son looks at his father. The father looks directly at George. Poor George just stood there looking soooooo guilty.'

"The movie was hard work," Romero stresses, "but a lot of funny things did happen. We built a farm for Steve's segment in the middle of a field near a small local airport. We didn't realize it at the time, but the pilots all used visual signposts to land. We threw quite a few planes off course for the week we had the farm set up. Of course, the next week, the building disappeared when we did. We probably caused quite a few pilots to lay off the saucer."

*Creepshow* was not all fun and games, though. Occasionally the film's sense of magic and harmonious productivity collided head-on with reality. The publicity caused by Romero's nonunion production infuriated a few union locals. Picketers began lining the roads to Romero's studio. Tires were reportedly slashed and, at one point, the exact whereabouts of the filming location was kept under wraps to avoid unnecessary confrontations.

There were technical hurdles to clear as well. "We used many new makeups," says Romero, "complicated makeups using animation, body suits, and puppetry. I'm not used to working with mechanical elements at all. I'd much rather spend my time constructing things filmically."

"Tom Savini and I had to work long hours to set up the shots with the monsters. We were both excited by all this experimentation, of course, but I think, deep down in our hearts, that both of us would have been happier shooting *Dawn of the Dead* again."

"I mean, it took us a couple of days just to film one or two of the crate creature's attacks. There was an

actor inside a suit, but there was also a hole beneath the creature with five other people operating different parts of its body. It required a lot of choreography. Things got tense on the set a few times."

"Personally, I didn't have a great time acting," Stephen King confesses. "I was flattered when George asked me, of course. I think it was a shrewd box-office move on his part, because a



Jon Lormer plays dear departed Nate Grantham, a fellow whose belief in the old saying 'you can't keep a good man down' provides a few surprises for his bereaved next of kin on Father's Day.

lot of people will want to check out this film just to see if King is really a turkey on the screen.

"My character, eventually, is taken over by this green growth. That was awful. I'd sit there for three or four hours having green goop put all over me—green contact lenses, the works. I kept on thinking, 'Well, it took Boris Karloff six hours for *The Mummy*.' Plus, once you're done up like that, you can't even undo your fly to go to the bathroom. That aspect of stardom is less than cool."

"Recently, I was wearing a new black leather motorcycle jacket my wife bought me when I checked into an upstate New York hotel. My shirt was open a bit when I walked into the lobby. I'm wearing a leather jacket and I still have shaved patches all over my chest from that makeup. The clerk looked at me, handed me the key, and said, 'If you want to party, I'll be up later.' Jeez! This movie is profoundly affecting my life."

Both King and Romero are counting on *Creepshow* to profoundly affect their professional lives. For King, it is the first film that he is directly involved with both creatively and financially. For Romero, it's his first real shot at mass acceptance. Accordingly, they are planning to reunite on a film of King's epic horror novel, *The Stand*. Before that, however, King plans to finish screenplays for *The Dead Zone* and *Cujo*, while Romero envisions filming his third "living dead" adventure.

In the meantime, everyone connected with *Creepshow* is anxiously awaiting its release and hoping for the best. "I'd love to see this received well critically," Romero admits. "I think it should appeal to both kids and adults."

King is a bit more elaborate. "I'd love to have some critic write: 'In the surprise performance of the year, schlock novelist Stephen King puts his acting hat on... revealing your basic Olivier laced with the essence of the Blues Brothers.'"

But perhaps it's Fritz Weaver who sums up the *Creepshow* experience best: "The supreme accolade this film could receive is some critic saying, 'Boy, this scared the *shit* out of me!'" He smiles. "That is what we all set out to do. Don't talk about aesthetics. Romero never does. The name of the game is *scare them!*" **17**



## Dark Crystal

JIM HENSON LEAVES THE MUPPETS BEHIND FOR A FULL-SCALE FANTASY EPIC POPULATED BY URRUS, GELFLINGS, AND SKEKSES. JAMES VERNIERE REPORTS.

Fairies, fays, elves, trolls, ogres, gnomes—these are the supernatural beings that inhabit both the world of myth and (along with hobbits, Munchkins, sorns, Lilliputians, and the rest) an entire subgenre of fantasy literature, which includes the classic work of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. These beings are a reminder that the unconscious mind constantly seeks to populate the unknown world with known, albeit fantastical, creatures, to give these creatures names, and to ascribe certain characteristics to each. It is a practice so universal that every culture on earth has its own invisible population. The creators of Universal's *Dark Crystal* would like to add a few new creatures to that

magical population, creatures with names like Skekses, Garthim, Gelflings, and Urrus. The degree of their success will depend upon how convincingly the filmmakers can bring these creatures to life.

It is relatively simple to create such creatures in literature, but until recently, filmmakers who wanted to adapt such fantasy creatures to the screen had two options: combine live action with stop-motion animation (an incredibly time-consuming process) à la Ray Harryhausen (*Jason and the Argonauts*, *Clash of the Titans*) or use conventional animation à la Walt Disney and, more recently, Ralph Bakshi (*Wizards*, *Lord of the Rings*). Now, with *Dark Crystal*, a third possibility has

# Dark Crystal

been explored: Muppets.

Sound ridiculous? And so it might, if you're thinking of Cookie Monster, Kermit, or Miss Piggy. Think instead of Yoda, that miraculous gnomelike creature in *The Empire Strikes Back* that sprang full-blown from the head of Jim Henson's colleague, Frank Oz, and you're on the right track. To this day many who were awed by Yoda are not aware that he was a Muppet—more complex and sophisticated than any of the *Sesame Street* gang, but a Muppet nonetheless. Now imagine a film full of such creatures. The possibilities are endless.

Actually, the creators of *Dark Crystal* don't like to refer to the creatures designed for their film as Muppets, which puts me in a quandary since they have coined no substitute term. When I suggested "nuppets" for "not Muppets," one source was not amused.

Conceived and created by British fantasy illustrator Brian Froud (credited as "conceptual designer"), muppet masters Jim Henson and Frank Oz, and *Star Wars* producer Gary Kurtz, *Dark Crystal* is one of the most ambitious and unusual genre films ever made. Budgeted at twenty-five million dollars, it's an imaginary-world epic which depicts a battle between the forces of good and evil on an alien planet with three suns. Excluding a few exteriors, *Dark Crystal* was filmed entirely at England's Elstree studios, where crews of filmmakers tackled the formidable task of transforming Brian Froud's paintings, with their eldritch creatures and extraterrestrial landscapes, into three dimensions. Codirectors Jim Henson and Frank Oz supervised not only the filming, but also the building of the articulated models, while production designer Harry Lang created the settings on Elstree sound stages. Alien skies were created by optical effects filmed in cloud chambers.

Based on a fairy tale written by Jim Henson, David O'Dell, and the celebrated British fantasy author Alan Garner, with cinematography by the great Oswald Morris



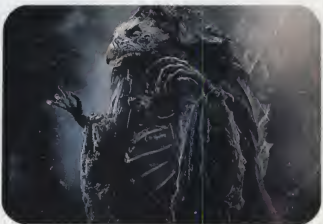
Artist Brian Froud's original design for an Uru known as The Weaver—prototype for the character shown on page 51.



*Dark Crystal*'s action takes place on a world with three suns. Alien skies were created in a cloud chamber.



A member of the noble race of Uru, only one of *Dark Crystal*'s menagerie of curious creatures.



First and worst among the villains in the film are the Skekses, rulers of the planet . . .

(*Moulin Rouge*, *Lolita*, *The Man Who Would Be King*), *Dark Crystal* is the story of a dying world ruled over by an evil race of creatures called the Skekses. Untouched by the Skekses, and living alone in a mystic valley, is another race called the Urru. An ancient prophecy predicts that a member of the race known as Gelfings would one day destroy the power of the Skekses. The film tells the story of that Gelfing, named Jen, and his quest to fulfill the prophecy.

Jen, an orphan adopted by the Urru, is instructed by a mystic master, who sends him on his quest. On his way he meets a wizardess-cum-alchemist named Aughra, from whom he learns that to fulfill the prophecy he must restore a shard of crystal to the great dark crystal in the castle of the Skekses. As Jen journeys to the castle, he meets a female Gelfing named Kira, and together they continue the journey. In the film's exciting climax, Jen and Kira infiltrate the Skekses' castle, where they battle insectoid warriors called the Garthim and attempt to restore the crystal shard before the planet's three suns come into conjunction.

It is hard to imagine articulated models engaged in such diverse action and dialogue; but then, some of the designs are so complex that four to six people are needed to operate them. There are, for example, several different models of Jen: one for close-ups, one for walking, one for almost everything else. A few of the creatures, like the Garthim, are men in suits, but even the suits contain complicated cable and gear-activated mechanisms. At least fifty of the beings, including Jen and Kira, are fully articulated models. Voices for these characters will be provided by American and British character actors not familiar to the public.

When Jim Henson, who developed the original Muppet designs, gave up *The Muppet Show* four years ago, he wanted to explore other possibilities, so he contacted Brian Froud with an idea for a live-action,



The film takes its title from a magical crystal housed in the Crystal Chamber of the Skekses castle.



The Garthim, insectlike warriors in the service of the Skekses, attack a still-legged Landstrider.



... with this Skekses chamberlain as one of the leading heavies.



A bevy of beaming Pod People, a tribe that adopts and raises the infant Kira, *Dark Crystal*'s heroine.



# Dark Crystal

feature-length film. Froud, whose work recalls Arthur Rackham and Edmund Dulac, spent the next three years developing designs for the characters and the environments. No newcomer to fantasy illustration, Froud started his career in Great Britain as a commercial artist and was discovered by the public when his work was included in the first *Worlds of Fantasy* calendar. Following that initial recognition, Froud was commissioned by Ballantine to do his own book, a collection called *The Land of Froud*. His subsequent work, *Faeries*, established him in the front ranks of graphic illustrators beside such artists as Frank Frazetta and Maurice Sendak.

Once Froud's designs were complete, Harry Lang and his crew took over. Along with Henson's Muppet design crew, Lang established ten separate working crews to develop each class of character: the Skekses, the Urrus, the Gelflings, the Garthim, the Pod People, the Landstriders, et al. Under the supervision of directors Jim Henson and Frank Oz, the film finished shooting four years after its initial development was begun.

In a break with tradition for Henson and crew, whose previous films, *The Muppet Movie* and *The Great Muppet Caper*, were G-rated, *Dark Crystal* is expected to get a PG-rating. Henson is entering territory previously staked out by *Star Wars* mogul George Lucas in an attempt to get a crossover audience. If all goes as planned, *Dark Crystal* should be a film adults will want to see—whether or not they have kids in tow.

What remains to be seen is whether or not these filmmakers can create a world which will pass muster in the naturalistic medium of the cinema. If these still photographs are any indication, they have succeeded. 17



Kira's pet, a ball of fur named Fizzgig, provides a bit of comic relief.



She may not be much to look at, but Aughra the wizardess can help young Jen on his quest to destroy the power of the Skekses.



Aughra's well-furnished alchemical laboratory, complete with working orrery. (You do know what an orrery is, don't you?)



Filmmakers Gary Kurtz, Jim Henson, and Frank Oz pose amid their creations in the Crystal Chamber.



YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TERROR IS  
UNTIL YOU'VE COME FACE TO FACE WITH . . .

# THE OTHER ONE

by Rick Norwood

**T**he man in Black! There, standing in the shadows!

Like a creature from the pages of an EC horror comic, he dogs my steps.

Nothing's sure. I don't think *anyone* knows. Nothing's really sure, but . . .

Ever since that awful day—that wonderful, awful day—he has been there. Everywhere I go! The Man in Black!

I remember. I plunged my arms, up to the elbows, into the brown paper bag full of beautiful green money. And suddenly, like a surgeon, I was thrusting my arms into a wound in the old man's chest. I don't think that really happened, but nothing's sure.

The Man in Black! Does he know? How *can* he know? I haven't spent the money. ("This money is stained," they would say. "What are these dark stains?")

Sometimes I draw the curtains tightly and take great handfuls of money and throw it into the air. Then, quick, quick, on hands and knees, I

gather it up and stuff it in the sack. Can the Man in Black see through drawn curtains? Nothing's sure.

Why does he follow me now, where the light from the street lamps pools like blood on the dark sidewalks? From lamp to lamp I run, deeper into the forest. But never far behind . . . the Man in Black.

Into a tunnel! This must be the lair of some animal. By its smell, I can identify the beast that dwells here. Its name is Subway. I will flee on its back. It will carry me away on its back.

But no! The station is deserted. I hear footsteps on the stairs.

At the far end of the platform, the posters and graffiti melt like paint. He's coming!

I think I am ready for him now. He is here.

"Are you . . ." I say, leaning close. "Are you . . ." (Nothing's sure but—) "Are you . . . Death?"

He shows me the silver letters on his briefcase: *IRS*.

"No," he says. "I'm the other one." **17**



by Connie Willis

THE FAIRY TALE HAD ENDED; THE KINGDOM WAS AWAKE ONCE MORE.  
BUT NOT EVERYONE LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

I should be happy. Everyone tells me so: my wife, my daughter, my brave new son-in-law. This is the happily ever after for which we have waited all these long years. But I fear we have waited far too long, and now it is too late to be happy.

My wife tries to jolly me out of this dark mood. "The roads are better," she says. "There is a new bridge at the ford."

"The better for armies to pass along, burning and killing," I answer. There are English already in Crecy, a story I would not believe at first, and they are carrying weapons I never heard of—a bow as tall as a man, a *ribaud* that spits black smoke and sudden death.

"You never liked the forest at our gates," she says. "Or the wolves."

"Nor do I like the town. And there are still wolves at our gates," I say. "Merchants and peddlers."

"They bring you the cinnamon and pepper for your food."

"That give me the bellyache."

"And medicines for the bellyache," she says, smiling to herself. She is embroidering on a piece of linen. Do women still do that, sitting with their heads bent forward over their work, pulling the fine stitches taut with their white hands? I do not think so. Embroidered cloth can be bought by the length in the town, I suppose. What cannot be bought in that town? Beauty, perhaps. Repose. I have seen nothing of either in this new world.

"This is a beautiful coat," said the insolent tailor they sent me to. Nothing would do but that I

have a new coat for the wedding. The tailor shouted in my ear through all the fitting and did not once call me "my lord." "A beautiful coat. Brocade. From the east."

"Gaudy, you mean," I said, but he did not hear me. How could he? The water mill runs night and day, sawing the forest into shops, houses, bridges. Soon the whole world will be town. "The coat is too short," I shouted at him. It showed what God intended decent men to hide.

"You are old-fashioned," he said. "Turn around."

The coat is too short. I am cold all the time. "Where are the servants?" I say to my wife. "I want a fire."

She looks up from her sewing as if she knows the answer will grieve me. "Gone," she says. "We are getting new ones from the town."

"Gone? Where?" I say, but I know already. Hardly awake, the cooks ran off to be bakers, the chamberlains burghers, the pages soldiers. "I shall catch my death of cold in this coat."

"The peddlers have medicines for chills," she says, and looks sideways at me to make me smile.

"It is all so changed," I say, frowning instead. "There is nothing about this world that I like."

"Our daughter has a husband and a kingdom," she says. "She did not prick her finger on a spindle and die that terrible day."

"No," I say, and have to smile after all. She is so beautiful, so happy in her prince. She would not have minded sleeping a thousand years, so long as he kissed her awake. She thinks the forest parted when he rode to find her, and I do not tell





her it was not she he came to find, but land for his fields, land for his new town, land to clear and settle and tax. He was surprised as any of his woodsmen to find us drowsing here. But he seems to love her, and there is no denying he is a brave young man. He moves through this strange time as if it held no terrors. Perhaps the forest does part for him. Or perhaps he has only chopped it down.

Only a little remains to the east, and even it is not so dark as before, so full of guarding briers. I went into it one day, looking, or so I said to myself, for the good fairy who saved my daughter, though she had never lived in that part of the forest. I found myself instead near the tower of the old fairy, who by her spite brought us all to this pass.

"I have come to ask a question," I shouted into the silence of the trees. "Why did you hate us so? What had we done to you that you should have come to our christening bearing curses?" There was no answer. "Had you outlived your time so that you hated all things new, even my infant daughter?" Silence. "Do you hate us still?"

In the answering silence I thought I could hear the town, builders, and rumbling wheels. As I came nearer, I saw that the tower had been knocked down, the stones heaped into piles and carted away. I followed the tracks of the wheels and came to a sunny clearing and to men in a holy habit I did not recognize. They told me they are Cistercians (are there new saints as well? Is everything new?) and that they are using the stones to build a church.

"Are you not afraid of the fairy who lived in this tower?" I asked them.

"Old man," said one of them, clapping his hand to my shoulder, "there are no fairies. Only God and his angels."

So I came away with the answer to my question after all. We have outlived our old enemy, and the only curse upon us is the cruel spell of time.

"We have lived through the worst of our days," my wife says, trying to comfort me.

"I hope so," I say, looking out the window of my castle onto the town, the fields beyond, the sea, onto a world without forests or wolves or fairies, a world with who knows what terrors to replace them. "I hope so."

"There is not a spinning wheel in all the kingdom," she says tearfully. "Not even in the town." She has pricked her finger on her embroidery. There are drops of blood on the linen. "I have not seen a single spinning wheel."

"Of course not," I say, and pat her shoulder.

There is at least no danger from that direction. What need have we of spinning wheels when every ship brings velvets, silks, cloth of gold? And perhaps other cargoes, not so welcome. English soldiers from the west. And from the east, tales of a black spell that kills men where they stand and moves like a curse toward France. Perhaps the old fairy is not dead after all, but only biding her time in some darker forest to the east.

I have dozed off. My wife comes to wake me for yet another feast. I grumble and turn on my side. "You're tired," she says kindly. "Go back to sleep."

Would that I could. 17

# Turn Down for Richmond

by G.J.A. O'Toole

IT WAS A SIMPLE FOUR-WORD MESSAGE—  
YET ON IT HUNG THE FUTURE OF A NATION.

What do you think of when you fly into a city like Washington, D.C., and look down on all those thousands of rooftops? Maybe you think of the thousands of human dramas simultaneously unfolding beneath them, the pains and passions of the people who live out their lives in the shelter of those slates and shingles and tarpaper. But I don't. I think about all those attics, and I wonder what the hell might be tucked away in some of them. In other words, I think about junk. If you don't think that's romantic, maybe you just haven't considered it, because junk can be very poignant.

Sometimes it can even be a little eerie.

Pedigreed junk is too rich for my budget, so I stay away from antique shops. Even those specialized varieties of trivia like baseball cards and comic books have become "collectable," hence pricy. I couldn't afford to indulge my taste for junk if it weren't for that wonderful new American institution, the garage sale.

Most Saturdays, bright and early, my wife, Jean, and I climb into the car and drive up and down the streets of some residential neighborhood, and I always find what I'm looking for in a few minutes—a hand-lettered sign saying "Tag Sale, Saturday and Sunday," and an address, tacked to a tree or telephone pole.

I always go on Saturday because by Sunday the assortment of junk for sale has been pretty well

picked over, and I hate to think what I may have missed. And I go early. Often I pull up just as the hopeful junk dealer is setting up his or her card table or getting out the cash box.

*What's that, sir or madam, as the case may be? The sale doesn't begin for another half-hour? Fine, I'll wait. Oh, may I come in and look around now? Thank you so much!*

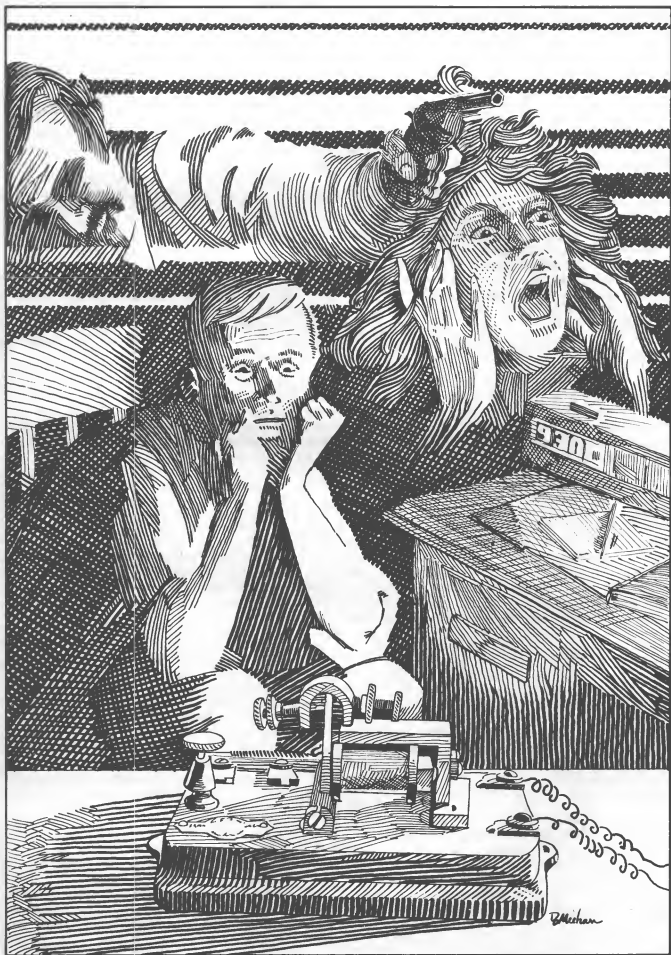
Jean always comes along, which might seem strange because she doesn't care for garage sales. That's just it: she hates junk—most of it, anyway. And she's afraid if she lets me go to the sales by myself, I'd come home with some enormous load of trash. She doesn't understand that junk is romantic.

"But, it's just . . . just junk!" she tells me.

"It's history," I reply. "It's been locked away in an attic. Most of these attics were here when Pearl Harbor was bombed. Many were here when McKinley was shot. Some stand today exactly as they stood when Fort Sumter was fired on. And a few are almost as old as the Republic. And all that time people have been cramming them full of the flotsam of life in the Nation's Capital."

"To you, it's flotsam; to me, it's junk."

We have that same conversation, word for word, every Saturday morning from April to October, which is the garage sale season. This year it started right on time, two weeks ago. April Fool's Day, as Jean remarked for some reason.



## Turn Down for Richmond

We set out right after breakfast, and I knew exactly where I wanted to look for a sale. I drove up Wisconsin Avenue above Georgetown, then headed east. It's a fairly old part of town, and a fairly affluent one. A year or so ago you wouldn't see any garage sales in that neighborhood. But times have gotten tough, and even pretty comfortable families are starting to feel the pinch. I guessed some of them might think of emptying out their attics and picking up a few dollars. I was right.

It was a big Victorian frame house, with lots of bay windows, turrets, and ivy on the walls. The sale wasn't actually in the garage; it was on a big screened porch that ran round three sides of the house. Two women, one elderly, the other middle-aged, were the proprietors. It turned out they were aunt and niece.

"Oh, I'm sorry," said the niece. "The sale doesn't start for another half-hour."

I went into my routine, and two minutes later Jean and I were wandering around the porch, picking through the treasure. I felt like the Count of Monte Cristo.

There was a clown bank; you pushed a lever and it stuck out its tongue to take a coin. And an ear trumpet, the hearing aid of a lost age innocent of transistors. There was a coffee mug with the Trylon and Perisphere of the 1939 New York World's Fair. There was an assortment of hand bells, two railroad oil lanterns, and a folding curtain stretcher. There were old 78 RPM records, and the labels bore the names of quaint and obscure ballads sung by forgotten voices—music that had not been heard in decades. There were books and bottles and boxes and . . .

Forgive me. Let's just say there was a gigantic and beautiful collection of junk. I bought a cut glass inkwell, a toy cannon, and a copy of *Don Sturdy in the Temples of Fear* before Jean began tugging me in the direction of the porch steps. That's when I saw it.

"Wait a minute!" I said.

It was a rectangle of polished wood, a few inches long and wide, set on a black metal base with a pair of holes at either end so it could be screwed to a table. A pair of black cylinders, each about an inch long and a half-inch in diameter were fastened to the wood by a shiny brass housing. A T-shaped armature rested between a pair of set-screws. I grabbed it.

"How much?" I asked.

"Ten dollars," said the niece. "We'd ask more for it, but the spring is missing."

"What is it?" Jean demanded.

"A telegraph sounder," I replied.

"A what?"

"Back in the old days, when they sent telegrams by Morse Code, this was a receiver. It

clicks." I jiggled the armature to demonstrate.

"It clicks," Jean echoed. "But what good is it?"

"Look," I answered patiently, "this thing is very old, maybe a hundred years, maybe more. It sat in some Western Union office, day in and day out for who knows how long, clicking out God knows what! Millions of messages, maybe; important ones, trivial ones! Maybe it reported the sinking of the *Maine*. Maybe it carried J. P. Morgan's instructions to his broker. Maybe it clicked out the dispatch that President Garfield was shot! Think of it!"

"It clicks," Jean repeated. "Ten dollars, and it's even got a spring missing. I think you've got a spring missing."

She stalked out while I paid for it. She didn't speak to me when we drove off, not until we turned onto Wisconsin Avenue.

"What? No more junk sales?"

"Not today," I said. "I want to get this home." I picked up the sounder from the seat. "This is something special."

"Thank Heaven for small favors!" she said. "What are you going to do with it?"

"First I'm going to clean it. Then I'm going to see if I can't scrounge up a spring somewhere in the cellar and fix it. Then I'm going to hook it up to a battery and see if it works."

"Goody! Click, click, click."

It shined up very nicely with a little furniture polish, metal cleaner, and elbow grease. I found a spring about the right size inside the latch from an old screen door. I attached one end to the little hook on the armature, and the other end to a knob on the end of the sounder that seemed to be the place where it was supposed to go. I had to go out to a hardware store to get a lantern battery to provide enough juice to work the magnets, and I also picked up a single-pole knife switch to use as a makeshift sending key. I already had enough wire.

It didn't take long to hook it up. There were a pair of screw-down terminals in the wood, connected under the base to the magnets. I attached the leads from the battery, after connecting the switch into the circuit. I drew a deep breath, then closed the switch.

*Click.*

I opened the switch.

*Click.*

I closed and opened the switch rapidly.

*Clickity clack, clickity, clickity, clack.*

It was the music of history. I closed my eyes and conjured up the image of some telegrapher in eyeshade and sleeve garters scribbling down the letters by gaslight.

"Clickity clack," said Jean from the doorway

It was the music  
of history. I closed  
my eyes and conjured up  
the image of some  
telegrapher in eyeshade  
and sleeve garters,  
scribbling down the letters  
by gaslight.

of my study. "Isn't there something about the difference between men and boys being nothing but the price of their toys? Are you ready for dinner, or do you want to play with that some more?"

After dinner I went back to my study and looked at the sounder again. I wondered how old it was. I'd have to go to the library and see if I could find a history of telegraphy. Maybe there'd be one with photographs. Maybe I'd see one just like mine.

I took some things off a shelf, set the sounder in their place, looked at it once more, and turned off the light and went into the living room. Jean was watching television, and there was supposed to be a good movie on at nine.

At nine-thirty, during the second bunch of commercials, I got up and went into the kitchen to get a beer. That's when I heard it.

*Clickity, clickity, clack. Clickity, clickity, clack.*

The sound stopped. I went into the study and turned on the light. The telegraph sounder sat there just as I left it. The battery was still connected, but the switch was open. It was silent.

"Jean?"

"What?"

"Did you hear anything just now?"

"Just the tv."

"Was there a clickity clack?"

"No. Are you still playing with that thing? Come on, the picture's started again."

It didn't happen again for more than a week. Then one night I heard it for the second time. It was about nine-thirty, just like before.

*Clickity clack.*

I ran into the study. Jean followed me.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Did you hear that?"

"Yes. It clicked. Isn't that what it's supposed to do?"

"Not if the switch isn't being opened and closed."

"Well, if it's not working right, why don't you take it back to those women and see if you can get a refund?"

I was about to reply when the sounder came to life.

*Clickity, clickity, clack. Clickity clack.*

It clicked and chattered like crazy.

"This is impossible," I said. "This can't be happening."

The sounder stopped. Jean had gone back to watch tv. I stood and stared at the thing for a long time. No more clicks. I picked it up, shook it. Maybe there was a loose connection, maybe it was getting triggered by some vibration from the street. No more clicks. I set it down, looked at it for a while longer, then turned out the light and went to watch tv.

I couldn't sleep that night. I kept thinking about what had happened, kept wondering about it. Then, about three in the morning, I got a very weird idea.

What if those clicks meant something?

I didn't know Morse Code. If I did, if I knew it well enough to decipher it by ear, would I have heard an intelligible message coming out of that old sounder? I chewed on that one for a couple of hours. Then, just before dawn, I knew what I was going to do.

When I came home from work that night, I had a tape recorder and a copy of the Morse Code. I got the first in a discount store and the second out of a book at the public library.

"What's all that for?" Jean asked.

"Wait and see."

I was ready at nine-thirty. I had been ready since nine. The microphone was right next to the sounder, the recorder was set to record at the push of a button. At nine-thirty the sounder sprang to life, right on schedule. I pushed the record button.

*Clickity clack, clickity clack.*

It went on furiously for about twenty seconds, then it stopped. Then it started up again for another twenty seconds and stopped. It did the same thing three more times, and I began to recognize a certain familiar rhythm in the clicks, as though it was repeating the same pattern each time. Then it went dead.

I rewound the recorder, set the speed back by a half, got paper and pencil ready, and played back the tape. I was right, the same sequence of dots and dashes, over and over again, five times. I got out the Morse Code table and laboriously deciphered the dots and dashes.

I guess I must have expected it to be gibberish, because I was pretty damned shocked when it turned out that it wasn't.

"Turn down for Richmond," it read.

I went into the living room.

"Jean, do the words 'Turn down for Richmond' mean anything to you?"

## Turn Down for Richmond

"Sounds like the title of a Country and Western song. Why?"

"Oh, nothing." I wasn't going to try to explain what I didn't understand and could hardly believe. I waited until the next morning, then I called my friend Harvey. He's an electronics engineer, and I thought he might be able to explain what was happening.

"Any of your neighbors hams?" he asked.

"What?"

"Amateur radio operators," he said. "That must be what it is. Some guy down the block is sending Morse on his rig. Must have a damned powerful transmitter if he's activating those old electromagnets in your telegraph set. It's a wonder you're not picking it up in the fillings in your teeth. It's probably illegal. You could report him to the FCC."

"But why would he be sending out the same message over and over. What does that mean, 'Turn down for Richmond'?"

"Search me."

I searched the library instead. The local branch had a couple of books on telegraphy. I read them cover to cover, but I didn't find a clue to what the message might mean. The next day was Friday, almost two weeks since this crazy business started. I left work early and went to the Library of Congress. After a few hours I found what I was looking for. I slammed the book shut, turned it in, and headed home.

"Where have you been?" Jean demanded. "I've been waiting dinner for an hour and a half."

"Never mind that. I found out what it meant!"

"What what meant?"

"'Turn down for Richmond.' See, back in the early days of the telegraph, when a message had to go a long distance, the electrical impulses in the wires got very weak, hardly enough to energize the magnets in the sounder. So the telegraphers along the line would relay a 'turn down' message on ahead, and the telegraphers near the end of the line would turn the little knob on their sounders to ease the tension on the armature spring. That way the weak signals could click the sounder and the message would get through."

"I don't understand a word you've said. Do you feel all right?"

"I'm fine. Look, this is what it means. The spring I put on the sounder is wound too tight. If I loosen it, I'll get the rest of the message!"

"Dear, I think your spring is wound too tight. Why don't you have some dinner and go to bed early?"

"What time is it?"

"Almost nine-thirty."

I ran into my study and got the tape recorder ready. The digital clock on my desk read 9:29:59 P.M.

I hit the record button just as the telegraph sounder started clicking. There it was again, the now so familiar pattern that meant "Turn down for Richmond."

I reached over and turned the knob until the spring was almost hanging loose against the armature. The sounder came to life again, but there was a new pattern of clicks this time. No more twenty-second bursts. It chattered away furiously for five minutes. Then it stopped. When I was sure there was no more, I rewound the tape and began the laborious process of deciphering what I had recorded. It took me almost forty-five minutes.

This is what it read:

Richmond

April 14, 1865—9:30 P.M.

Major A. C. Richards,  
Department of the Metropolitan Police,  
483 Tenth Street,  
Washington City.

Most urgent you take every measure to secure the person of President Lincoln. Reports of informers here disclose plot to assassinate him in a public place in Washington City this evening.

Stover

I looked at the clock. 10:20:01 P.M. Today was Friday, April 14, the anniversary of Lincoln's assassination, and it was now almost the exact minute historians say Booth pulled the trigger. The message had finally arrived, more than a century overdue.

I never found out who Stover was. It doesn't really matter.

Do you believe in ghosts? Maybe the unquiet spirit of Detective Stover was haunting my old telegraph sounder, but I don't think so. After all, he did his job. It wasn't his fault others didn't do theirs. No, I don't think Stover's spirit is uneasy.

Maybe we all have some important thing we must do in life, some reason for being born, growing up, and dying. And maybe, for most of us, it's some little thing that we're supposed to do, something that doesn't seem very important at the time we're supposed to do it. For that nameless telegrapher, it must have been to turn down the tension on his armature spring on that April evening so long ago.

At last that's been done. I've heard no more clicking from the old sounder.

I turned down for Richmond, and that telegrapher, whoever he was, may rest in peace. 7

# WEIGH STATION

by Robert Crais

## THE ROAD TO HELL WAS A SIX-LANE HIGHWAY, AND THE DAMNED ALL DROVE BIG RIGS.

**H**is was the only car in either direction, three-thirty A.M. on the Antelope Valley Freeway, driving north above L.A., heading for a week at Lake Tahoe, then a new life in San Francisco. He'd made the early start to be sure of arriving at Tahoe before dark.

The Zee Turbo had been a present to himself. After the Final Judgment of Dissolution had come through and the divorce from Maggie was finally a reality, after he had quit his job at the small Pasadena law firm where he'd worked during their entire six-year marriage, after he'd applied to and been—hallelujah!—hired by one of the most prestigious law firms in San Francisco, after all that, he'd said what the hell and bought the car, even though he could barely scrape together the down payment. The

monthly installments were horrendous, but given a year up at the new firm at the new salary, they'd seem like chicken feed.

David Hamill caught a flash of light in the rear-view mirror. He tensed and scanned the road ahead. There was a sign coming up quick around a bend in the highway:

PALMDALE	12
LANCASTER	18
EDWARDS AFB	24

—and then it was gone, racing to somewhere far behind. Palmdale and Lancaster were to the north, Edwards Air Force Base to the northeast. He would have to pass through Palmdale and Lancaster to make the 94 connection in Mojave for Tahoe.





## WEIGH STATION

David checked the rearview mirror again, but the light was gone, hidden behind the mountain. He laughed to himself. Why the sudden tension over another headlight? Dumb.

Then the headlights were back. David watched them, unconsciously giving the Datsun a little more gas. They were growing larger and coming fast.

Out of the corner of his eye, he glimpsed another sign, this one much smaller than the last:

### TRUCK ROUTE AHEAD ALL TRUCKS EXIT

In the mirror, he saw a row of tiny yellow specks above the headlights. Running lights! It was a truck. After a moment, it passed under a highway lamp and David could make out that it was a big Kenworth, an eighteen-wheeler, and the sonofabitch was coming up on him like there was no tomorrow.

David slipped the Zee into the right lane.

The truck changed lanes, too. But did it change to the right or the left? It was hard to be sure because of the curve. Then, a moment later, the truck was out of the curve. It was in the right-hand lane, plowing forward, with no sign of slowing.

Angry and disgusted, David shot a nervous glance ahead. This was all he needed, some nut wanting to play *Duel*. He eased the car to the center lane. At the same instant, the truck's lights moved left, too.

Shit. He could floor it and simply blow away from the big truck. The Zee could do it, no problem. But, goddammit, he shouldn't have to—

He watched in the mirror as the truck came closer and closer and closer until it was there, on his ass, its air horn roaring a long, continuous moan that tore through the little car, even at eighty wind-screaming miles per hour. David jerked the wheel to the right just as the truck veered left. Windshock from the truck buffeted the little Datsun.

"Bastard!" David screamed. "Asshole!" He hit the window's electric DOWN button and shoved his hand out, giving the finger. Wind tore through the car, drowning his cries.

As the truck's cab pulled alongside the Zee, David glanced over and saw the driver. He was a gaunt, pale man, illuminated by the approaching highway lamp. He sat hunched over the wheel, staring straight ahead with eyes that seemed almost luminescent in the shadows of the cab. Something about those eyes held David.

Then the truck was far ahead and gone. David took a deep breath, let it out slowly, and raised the window. He was still shaking his head and cursing when he saw the red *Fuel Low* light on the dash flicker.

He looked over at the twin fuel gauges. Each of the two needles hovered a bare millimeter over E.

"God hates me," he said. "I *know* God hates me!"

He tapped the glass covering the gauges. The needles stayed where they were.

This is *impossible*, he thought. When he'd left that morning, the tank had been full. He'd topped it off last night at the Mobil station on the corner.

The *Fuel Low* light stopped blinking and burned a bright, steady red. He considered the possibility of the fuel gauges being broken, then discounted it. The warning light and the gauges were on two separate circuits. They *both* wouldn't malfunction.

He sank down in the bucket and stared glumly ahead, glad that Maggie wasn't there to witness this. If the fuel gauges were working, then he should've known how quickly he was using gas. But he hadn't been looking at the gas gauges. He'd only been looking at the tach and the speedometer. *Playing with his toy*, he thought sarcastically, just the way *she* would think it. A *lemon* of a toy, at that!

After a moment, he sat up taller in the seat and peered out into the dark. Getting some gas in the middle of the goddamn desert was going to pose a problem. There wouldn't be another turnoff from the freeway until the outskirts of Palmdale, which was maybe eight or nine miles away. Maybe he could make it, maybe not. The Datsun's Owner's Manual said that when the *Fuel Low* warning came on, there would only be one and a half to two gallons of fuel left in the tank. If he was getting four or five miles to the gallon—which is what he *had* to be getting to run out of gas so quickly—then maybe, just maybe, he could make it. But the warning light had been on now for a few minutes, and if there was only one gallon left, or less...

There was a glimmer of light far ahead. Moments later, the light became street lamps and signs. It was the truck route, branching away from the freeway to the right.

He thought about it. What was a truck route, anyway? There'd be a weigh station, but what else? Exits, turnoffs, maybe a truck stop? He had no idea. Who ever takes a truck route?

If there was a truck stop, then he could get help. But who knows how far he'd have to go to get there. And no telling where the damn thing would lead. He might end up in another state with no way off. He looked down at the dash. The red *Fuel Low* light burned up at him. The twin fuel needles rested on their respective E's.

The turnoff was upon him. He gave another glance at the fuel gauge. Was it going to be Palmdale or—

He swung right, passing under the huge green and white TRUCK ROUTE sign. Below, it said: ALL TRUCKS EXIT. TRUCKS ONLY.

Gamble on the truck stop.

The truck route twisted and climbed up into the mountains, and it was only moments before the

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freeway disappeared from his mirror. He nursed the car another mile, maybe two, and then the Datsun's turbo-charged engine grudgingly died.

So much for gambling.

His speed bled away quickly. *Fifty, forty, thirty-five.* David lowered the window for the breeze and found the night air of the high desert country cold and sharp. He had gone almost another mile when he edged the Datsun onto the shoulder—*twenty, fifteen, ten, five*—where it rolled to a stop and was still.

"Shit."

He sat silently a moment, cursing a lemon that would get five miles to the gallon when it was supposed to get thirty, then gave a loud Bronx cheer. Only thing he could do was try to hike up the road to the weigh station, or, if he was lucky, the truck stop he'd gambled on.

There was a flashlight in the glovebox. He dug through suitcases until he found a jacket, then got out of the car. He put the flashlight in his back pocket and locked the doors. He looked up and down the road. There was nothing in either direction. Helluva way to start a new life, he thought. Wouldn't Maggie laugh. Wouldn't she laugh, indeed.

He kicked the Datsun, turned away, and started up the truck route.

**H**e was almost at the top of the mountain, on a stretch of road that snaked back and forth in the canyons, when he heard a truck's rumble echoing up the mountain behind him.

Thank God.

David stopped and had to bend over, propping his hands on his knees. His legs were cramping, and muscle stitch ripped at his side. He'd walked almost three miles of uphill grade; six years of sitting on your butt in a law office did not keep one lean and hard. But here was a chance not to walk anymore.

When the truck's lights were coming directly toward him, David began flagging his arms. He found himself praying sincerely for a merciful driver.

The truck drew closer.

Stop, David said.

Closer.

Please stop!

Closer still.

*I don't like it out here!*

The air brakes hissed and the truck—this one a Mack—slowed. The rig rolled to a stop a hundred yards past him.

Thank God, again! David forgot the cramps and broke into a trot. Halfway there, a spotlight popped on, washing him in light. He stopped for a moment, surprised, then began walking toward the light.

"Hey," David called, "think you could give me a lift up the road?" The driver was obviously a wary man, so David gave it his most reassuring courtroom voice.

"That your Zee back there?"

David was close enough now to raise a hand and block out most of the spotlight's glare. He could make out a guy in his mid-thirties, with shaggy hair and a cowboy hat, looking down from the cab of the truck.

"Sucker crapped out on me," David said, after a nod. "I took the truck route because I figured I could make the weigh station or a truck stop or something before I ran out of gas."

There was a long pause, so David said, "Guess I figured wrong."

After a moment, the spotlight clicked off and the cab door nearest David cracked open. "Tough break. Hop on up, an' I'll give you a lift."

The driver's name was Mitchelson and he had a hard, gritty hand with grease under the nails. He smelled of cigarettes and too many hours on the road, but his eyes weren't bugging out, and he gave enough of a damn to stop. Local radio was giving the early morning farm reports and a low hiss came from a dormant CB. It was good to be off the truck route and with another human being.

"Tell you what," Mitchelson was saying, "I've got a coupla Pabsts in the fridge back there if you want one. Just look under that pile of clothes." He flipped a switch and the tiny sleeper in the rear of the cab lit up.

David dug out the two beers and passed one to Mitchelson. The beer was cold and good and slaked the scum from his throat, and David finally just shook his head and laughed about it. Mitchelson seemed to understand, and pretty soon he was laughing, too.

"What's up ahead?" David asked.

"Well, somewhere up ahead, this baby loops back to the main freeway—that'd be around Palmdale, I'd guess."

David shook his head, swallowing beer. "Not what I meant. Is there a truck stop or an all-night gas station where I could get some help?"

"Beats me."

David smiled. "I thought you guys knew the road like the backs of your hands."

Now it was Mitchelson's turn to smile. "You watch too much tv."

"All I need is a place where I can phone the Triple A."

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Mitchelson shrugged. "If you drive a road, you know it. Me, I never made this run before. I do mostly short-haul work between Arizona and Nevada."

David grudgingly accepted it and sipped the Pabst. If there was no place to use a phone, he was really up a creek. "A little off course, aren't you?"

"More than a little. The company stuck me on this run because the transfer driver piled it up just outside of Phoenix." From the tone in Mitchelson's voice, David could tell he didn't like it. "Damn idiot took it into a culvert doing seventy. Tried to pass a slow freight."

David nodded. "Had some clown almost blow me off the road just before the car went out on me. It was like I wasn't even on the road. The sonofabitch would've rolled right over me to get where he was going."

"Lots of guys like that," Mitchelson said. "Seems to be more and more of 'em. Guys who give the trade a bad name."

"Seems the legal profession doesn't have the market cornered on assholes." David glanced at his watch, wondering now if he'd make Tahoe before midnight. If he had trouble finding a phone, and if the Triple A took its good time getting out to him . . .

"You can see the change at the overnight truck stops more than anywhere else," Mitchelson said. He didn't seem to notice David's preoccupation, or, if he did, didn't mind. David thought it must be lonely driving a long run by yourself.

"What change?"

Mitchelson thought about it a moment before answering. "I used to look forward to staying overnight at these places, see. You'd meet up with guys you hadn't seen in years—mostly transfer guys, the long-haulers—and there'd be card games and drinking a lot of beer and shooting the bull and whatnot."

"Now, a guy'll walk in you never seen before and you'll never see again, and you can tell by the look on his face he doesn't care. It's like they're not seeing *you*, these guys, like they get out of their trucks and they go through the motions, but they're still seeing the road and what's at the end of it and that's all they care about."

David looked over at Mitchelson, thinking about the expression on the driver who'd blown past him. "Know what you mean?"

"Then they're back in their rigs, and burning up the highways. For what?" He looked at David. "That's what kills me. For what?"

"So they can try to beat a slow freight and pile it into a culvert," David said.

Mitchelson looked at him for a long moment, then nodded and looked back to the road. "Yeah, so they can pile it into a culvert, so old Danny Mitchelson has to finish carrying their load to Palmdale."

Palmdale! David turned in the seat. "You're going through to Palmdale?"

"That's what the voucher says."

That's it! That's it! He didn't need the Triple A. "Mind if I ride all the way through with you?"

"Giving up on the truck stop?"

"I'm giving up on is a sixteen-thousand-dollar automobile that leaves you stranded in the middle of the desert. Palmdale's big enough to have a Datsun dealership."

Mitchelson took a slug from his beer and smiled. "You gonna make 'em eat it."

"I'm gonna make 'em eat it," David said. And make them hand over a free rental so he could hit Tahoe by midnight. He smiled to himself, pleased with the new plan, and enjoyed the rest of his beer. It was one of the better beers he had ever drunk.

**A**s they rounded the curve, there was a glow like an aerie of light in the mountains. "Is that the weigh station?" David asked.

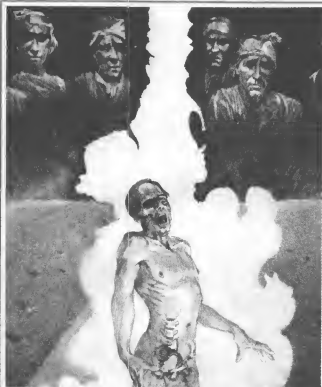
Mitchelson nodded, then downed the rest of his Pabst in a long, steady pull. He crumpled the can, rolled down the window, and tossed it out. "Look, I'm gonna have to let you out on account of the company might have a checker here. But before I get on the scales, I'll stop and kill some time by taking a piss or something so you can catch up. After I get off the scales, I'll slow down enough for you to hop aboard again, okay?"

"No problem," David said. *Anything* was worth getting to those bastards at the dealership.

When they were about half a mile from the station, Mitchelson said, "Okay, here we go. Do it fast." Then he shot a glance in the rearview, downshifted, and pegged the brakes. David swung out of the cab, hit running, and shouted back, "See you on the other side!" The diesel roared and accelerated away.

The weigh station was a squat cinderblock building festooned with bright sodium-vapor lamps. It looked to be painted tan or grey, but David couldn't be sure. The front of the building was glassed and shadowed; pale green and yellow lights glowed through the windows. Inside, there would be a coffee pot, maybe a tv, and a couple of guys who liked the late shift. A sign to the left of the building said **ALL TRUCKS MUST BE WEIGHED**. Arrows pointed to two scale lanes. Each lane had a red light/green light suspended above it. The lights in both lanes seemed to be continually green. The two scales were directly in front of the glass side of the building.

The Mack eased into the scale lane closest to the building and stopped. David reached the rear of the building as Mitchelson was climbing down from the cab. The rear wasn't lit except for the backwash from the lamps dotting the front and sides of the station. There were rocks, a couple of trash barrels, and overgrown clumps of desert brush and tumbleweed. He took it easy, picking his way carefully so as not to make any noise and alert whoever was in the building.



David stayed in the shadows until he was a hundred yards past the building and the scales. The door on the side of the station opened and Mitchelson appeared. He stood in the doorway, holding the door open, a confused expression on his face. Then he let the door swing closed. Instead of going back to his truck, he went to the rear of the station.

David moved out a few paces, keeping low. He wasn't sure what was going on, but he thought Mitchelson might be looking for him. He raised his arms and waved, but the trucker didn't see him. After a few seconds, Mitchelson walked around to the front and stood before the dark windows. Abruptly he turned and walked to the truck. David gave a long, whistling sigh of relief when the diesel started. The big truck eased slowly up to the scales, then gave a slight lurch. For an instant, just an instant, when the truck lurched, David thought he heard a scream.

It was probably a stuck air brake.

Then the diesel was revving and the gears were being shifted and the huge truck was lumbering forward. Finally, he thought, David moved to the edge of the shadows and waited.

The truck accelerated, faster and faster, gearing up, digging in. Hey, David thought; then, "Hey!" he yelled. "Son of a bitch!" Mitchelson wasn't going to stop! The bastard wasn't going to stop! David sprang up and ran to the road, screaming "Hey, goddammit! Wait! Wait!" But then the Mack was passing him. In that last moment, he tried to see into the cab, to make eye contact with that bastard Mitchelson. But Mitchelson, masked in shadow, was only staring straight ahead, looking far up the road. Son of a bitch, David thought. He stood in the middle of the lane, watching the disappearing lights of Mitchelson's truck. Only thing to do now was forget the dealership and go back to the weigh station like he'd originally planned and use their phone—

That's when it hit him, and he spun around.

There weren't any cars parked at the station. *Then how the hell do the bastards get to work?* Something icy raced over his scalp and he felt a metal-on-metal sound begin in his throat. Then the answer came to him, and he thought, *Their wives drop them off, that's how.* The something icy went away and was forgotten.

Disgusted, he walked back to the weigh station. Imagine, Mitchelson. And he had liked the guy, too.

When he reached the door, he paused, drawing up short just before taking the handle. Something made him uneasy. There had been no movement, no sound of any kind from the place. Maybe a shadow should have moved behind the glass. Maybe one of the little lights he could see through the glass should've blinked or altogether disappeared as something within blocked it out. But there was nothing. Nothing.

Without knowing why, he wanted to turn away and run back to the Zee. From there, he could walk to the Antelope Valley Freeway and get off this godforsaken truck route; he could walk all the way into Palmdale, if that's what it took.

Silly. "You're being silly," he said. On the other side of this door was a phone and a couple of friendly guys and some hot coffee and a radio running the late ball scores. Silly. He opened the door.

"Hello."

No answer.

He leaned forward. "Anybody home?"

Still no answer. He took a tentative step inside. There was no radio running the late ball scores, no tv with the early morning Creature Feature, no smell of coffee. The place was cold and musty. Through the smoked glass he saw the scales and signal lights that seemed forever to be green. There were no sounds. He let the door close with a soft *skreel* behind him.

"I ran out of gas back down the road . . ." He said it to the rear of the place, thinking someone might be in the john. Again, there was no answer.

The station was filled with electronics. The walls, from floor to ceiling, front to back, were lined with banks of dials and displays and pale green and yellow lights that burned steadily without blinking. There was a console stretching across the room. It looked like the consoles he'd seen in pictures of the NASA Mission Control Center in Houston. Behind it were two worn, dark green secretarial chairs, the seat material broken from much use.

Whatever he was looking at, whatever this was, David knew it couldn't be for weighing trucks. He moved cautiously to the counter, suddenly not wanting to be heard, suddenly feeling very much afraid.

He touched the top of the console and his fingers came away with dust. Tiny gossamer spiderwebs clung over toggle switches and button panels and dial faceplates. The two chairs were cocooned with a soft pelt of webbings. David took a deep

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breath, let it out slow and easy. Whatever this place was, no one had sat in those chairs in a long while. A long, long while.

He moved around the console and saw that there was printing beneath the buttons and switches. He pulled the flashlight from his back pocket and brushed the spiderwebs and dust away from the words. ENERGY DRIFT—SPIN (NEG.)—CLARITY—COMMITMENT. He didn't understand what he read. Commitment? He moved to another part of the console. REAL TIME—OBJECTIVE TIME—POINT DISTORTION. *Jesus!* What the hell was going on here? PERSEVERANCE—EMOTIONAL ACCORD—PLEASURANT GRADIENT. He had no idea what it meant. He just knew—he was *positive*—that he wasn't supposed to be here.

He took a last incredulous look around, then backed out of the building. David glanced up at the night sky and the stars and then over toward Edwards. The air base must be only six or seven miles away. Maybe there was a connection. Edwards tested top secret government stuff. Maybe *this*, whatever it was. A shudder raced down his back and then up again. Goosebumps raised the small hairs on the back of his neck and arms. All the exotic technology somehow reached deep, raking silicon-chip claws against a part of him that was primitive and preferred dark, dank caves to spun silica and phosphor dots.

Only thing left to do was to try to find some help on the main highway. He turned away from the weigh station and, walking fast, headed into the middle of the nearest scale lane. The fast walk became a trot. And, without understanding it, without even *wanting* to understand it, because feeling it was enough, the trot became a run.

There were the scales. Eighteen-wheeler-sized rectangles in the floodlight-washed pavement before him. He wondered why they were outlined in bright red candystriping. Then, as he remembered pictures of rocket nozzles and jet exhaust pipes and huge suction ducts and other things that were dangerous and so wore red candystriping as a warning, he realized the answer to his own question. He groaned, and tried with every muscle and nerve in his body to stop, to veer away, but it was too late. One of his feet hit the scale. His last thought was of the old children's rhyme:

*Step on a crack, break your mother's back!*

There was the hot, oily sound of one piece of metal being rubbed with too much force against another piece of metal.

It was his scream.

It was nine-eleven in the morning when the truck appeared, climbing the winding route to the weigh station. Another Mack, this one was hauling huge machine parts strapped atop a flatbed trailer.

David stood on the far side of the scales, anxiously waiting. He'd been at the weigh station for almost five hours, and for five hours had been resisting a screaming urge to start away on foot. But here and here alone, where the trucks slowed, would be his only chance to hop a ride. A ride would be necessary.

He thought about the scale.

There had been the flash, and then the pulling and tearing of what could have been the changing of dimensions or the altering of synapse and brain wave or the replacement of soul. It could have been any of those things, or a thousand others. In that micro-micro-second of flash and distortion, he had seen through the eyes of Mitchelson and the hollow-eyed driver in the Kenworth and scores of others, all staring across dashboards and steering wheels and hood ornaments onto the nighttime highway. And when the flash and bit of scream were over, finished, he had been left *different*. Part of something, yet part of nothing; warm, yet cold; satiated, yet hungry.

Not long after, the hunger began to grow.

He'd thought about standing on the scale again but somehow knew that only the *next* weigh station, the one further up the road, could feed the hunger.

For a while, he had wondered the why and what and who of it; but again, somehow, the why and what and who, just like vague thoughts of a sports car and a place he had been going and a woman named Maggie, were unimportant. The weigh station simply *was*.

Besides, other things were important now. Things like getting to the next weigh station. Things like the hunger, which was now eating at him, burning in his gut, causing his bowels to knot and quiver.

It had been almost five hours. He was behind schedule.

The Mack slowed to a stop before the scales, then rolled slowly forward. The driver stared at David with masked, empty eyes.

The truck touched the scales, and there came the metal-on-metal sound. The truck lingered on the red-outlined rectangle. Then the engine revved and the truck accelerated off the scale, showing no intention of stopping.

David jumped upon the truck's running board as it passed, opened the door, and climbed inside. The driver didn't look at him. He was staring up the road at something far away.

"This is the truck route," the driver said.

David nodded, feeling his eyes pop forward, until he, too, was staring up the road. "How long to the next weigh station?"

After a moment, the driver said, "Just over three hours."

David straightened in his seat, straining forward, unblinking, wishing he could see the next weigh station.

"Hurry," he said. **79**



# J.C. in the Springtime

by I. Daniel Roth

A PARK BENCH, A SUNNY APRIL AFTERNOON, AND A WINO  
WITH A PAPER BAG. WHAT BETTER SETTING FOR A MIRACLE?

From across the park, he felt the man's pain and thought, *What the hell ...* They were in Bryant Park, behind the library on Forty-second Street. J. C. sat on a bench near Sixth Avenue, quietly finishing off the wine in his bottle. The bottle was ten years old. He reminded himself to get a brown paper bag tomorrow. The bag was a goddamn pain in the ass, but he had never seen a wino without one and he didn't want to be the first.

J. C. slowly got up and made his way to the water fountain. As he filled his bottle, he wondered why every damned junkie in the city seemed to be there today. Their pain, gray and sharp, filled the air, making the park look dingier than usual. *What's going on?* he thought, *an April White Sale?* He screwed the cap back on and replaced the bottle in the pocket of his thirdhand denim jacket.

The source of the electric blue pain was right behind the library. J. C. walked over to him, past the dealers in slow death and oregano, their young and doomed customers, and the other derelicts. An enormous radio blared something by somebody who

wanted to be Donna Summer and couldn't.

The man was a lawyer. In his late twenties, he wore a three-piece navy blue pinstripe suit, carried an expensive-looking black leather briefcase, and wore a black plastic jogger's wristwatch. His light brown hair was cut short and styled. He *had* to be a lawyer. *Either the booze is finally getting to me,* thought J. C., *or some law school is cloning them.* The lawyer sat on a bench under a tree, his briefcase in his lap, his hands clenched tightly, and stared at his shoes. J. C. went to him, remembering to stagger a bit. Sometimes he forgot.

The lawyer, still engulfed with his pain, didn't notice J. C. when he sat next to him. Focusing his eyes ten feet past the lawyer's face, J. C. said, "Hey fella, you okay? You okay?"

The lawyer turned his head slowly. For a moment, he couldn't even see the library. Then he smelled the booze and saw the old wino sitting next to him. He almost winced.

"... Yeah, yeah, I'm all right. I was just, uh, thinking."

Sure, thought J. C. "Yeah, well, you looked kinda bad there, buddy. I mean, it can't be that bad, can it?"

The lawyer smiled. It wasn't a pleasant smile. His pain dimmed a little. J. C. patiently waited for him to tell what was troubling him. He knew the lawyer would. They always did.

"I have cancer," said the lawyer softly.

*Wrong,* thought J. C. *What you have, schmuck, is an ulcer. You've had it for about a week and you haven't seen a doctor and you're scared shitless. Schmuck.* "Oh jeez, fella, I'm sorry," said J. C. He gave his face the right amount of shock and slurred his words a bit more.

"It's all right. You didn't know. It's just that ... just that ... I mean, well, it's bad enough for me, but how do I tell Janice?"

"Janice?"

"... Janice. My, uh, wife."

J. C. glanced at the lawyer's thin gold wedding ring and nodded. He wondered what his wife's name was. It sure as hell wasn't Janice.

"You see, it's the baby ..."

"The baby?"

"Yeah. We're going to have a baby." He made a sound. It was probably meant to be a laugh. "I don't know why I'm telling you all this."

I do, thought J. C.

"We're going to have a baby. We've been trying for over a year, you know? After the miscarriage, we didn't think we could have one, but, well, I guess we got lucky. The thing is, the thing is I don't think she can handle it, you know? She's not very strong, I mean Frances's never been very strong. She might lose the baby and I really couldn't handle that, you know? I really couldn't!"

Now.

J. C. put his hand on the lawyer's shoulder and squeezed.

"Hey buddy, pull y'self together, huh? C'mon, pull y'self together."

And the tears, held back for so long, dried up and the electric blue pain faded to half a firefly's glow and vanished and the terrified young man turned back into a preppie corporate lawyer and he pulled himself together.

All at once, he seemed to realize where he was and who he was talking to. He didn't look happy about it. J. C. took his hand off his shoulder and took his bottle out of his pocket.

"Uh, listen, I've got to get back home," said the lawyer, looking at his watch. He had accidentally pushed the button turning it into a stopwatch. J. C. pretended not to notice. "Fra—, uh, Janice is waiting for me. I'm sorry I dumped all my troubles on you like this."

J. C. couldn't help it. He smiled. "S'okay, kid.

No sweat a'tall. Wanna snort?"

"Uh, no. No thanks." He pulled a five-dollar bill out of his coat pocket. Handing it to J. C., he said, "Thank you ..."

"Said it was okay, buddy." He took the bill and stuffed it into his shirt.

The lawyer stood up. J. C. felt his bewilderment that he could. He tucked his briefcase under his arm and walked away, looking taller, stronger, and younger than before. He walked over to Sixth Avenue and the subway and J. C. never saw him again.

"Try not to waste it, schmuck," said J. C. He unscrewed the cap and took a drink from his bottle. The wine was sweet and cool as it always was. He tried to remember how many people he had touched. He couldn't. He had lost count in 1875. He recapped the bottle, put it back in his pocket, and slowly rubbed his fingers over his palms, an old habit he'd never bothered to break. *They're all so damned young,* he thought sadly.

It was late afternoon and the sun was almost down. People hurried home or hurried to work or hurried to dinner or just hurried, out of habit. The junkies scurried off with their junk, taking some of the grayness with them. The street lights came on and the noises of the city became louder, as if cursing the darkness. The darkness carried a chill with it and J. C. pushed his hands into the pockets of his worn jacket.

*I'm too old for this,* he thought, *too old and too sober. I've been drinking since six this morning and I don't even have a buzz. I wonder why I bother. I'll bet that schmuck's been screwing Janice since before he married Frances. That's where he's going now, I'll bet. To screw his mistress while his wife sits at home and worries. He wasn't worth it.*

*Aw, who am I kidding? He was worth it. They're all worth it. Even the schmucks.*

*Especially the schmucks.*

He decided to get something to eat and finish off the bottle later. He slowly got up and headed for Forty-second Street. There was a Salvation Army pot next to the big newsstand and J. C. managed to slip the lawyer's five-dollar bill into it without anyone noticing.

As he walked down Fifth Avenue to the Chock Full O'Nuts, he realized that his feet hurt less than usual. He wondered why. He wondered if Frances would be all right.

The Fifth Avenue bus that lumbered past him had two ads on its side. One was for tight pants with a fancy name he couldn't read. The other said, "HAPPY EASTER, NEW YORK!"

J. C. stared at it for a long while after it had gone. He had forgotten. **W**

# A Lover's Alibi

by Chet Williamson

THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING WRONG WITH THE MURDERER'S STORY.  
IT WAS GETTING TOO BELIEVABLE!

Harold Dodge had been afraid he would choke at the last second, but he didn't. He brought the gun up smoothly from where he had hidden it under her chair, pressed it against her right temple, closed his eyes, and pulled the trigger. When he made himself look, he saw very little blood. He was glad. He'd been afraid that there would be a spattering of it, like in the movies, that his sweater would bear red blotches that would brand him to all Manhattan as a wife-killer.\*

But there was only a thin trickle that was almost indistinguishable from her auburn hair in the dim light. He looked at his watch even though he'd checked it only a minute before. It had been 8:32 then; it was 8:33 now. No time warp had sprung from the force of Carol's death to either stretch time or compress it. It was somehow reassuring. In the space of time it had taken to pull a trigger, he had changed immeasurably. But not time. And not the alibis that time supplied.

He took a few deep breaths and tried to relax. There was no rush, not really. The walls of their condo were thick enough to contain the sound of thousand-decibel rock bands at Carol's goddamned New Year's Eve parties without drawing the neighbors' fire, so to imagine that the cozy pop of Carol's purse-sized .22 would carry through the brick and plaster was a paranoid fantasy.

Harold wiped his prints from the blued metal and pressed Carol's fingers (were they growing cold so soon?) around the butt and trigger. Her prints were already on the cartridge shells inside. She had loaded them herself months ago after the Clemens woman was attacked out front. Harold had thought she was foolish to buy a gun. Now he was glad she had.

He left the building by the fire stairs, meeting no one during his descent. The twenty-floor walk made his legs rubbery by the time he hit the street, but he ignored the pain and walked briskly toward his car five blocks away. He edged the Jaguar out into traffic and headed for the tunnels. Once free of the city, he took the road for Newark.

It was 9:47 by the dashboard clock when he pulled into the parking lot under Susan's apartment house. He climbed the fire stairs to the fourth floor,

peeked through the tempered glass window to make sure the hall was empty, and dashed into her apartment.

She was in his arms before the door had finished closing, and he couldn't remember her ever holding on so tight, not even in bed.

"Did you do it?" Her words were a rough whisper.

"Yeah. Yeah, it's done."

"Any problems?" she asked anxiously, pulling back and looking at his face.

He shook his head. "You?"

"It went fine." Her voice shook, and he wasn't sure if she meant it. "The pizza kid came at 8:15."

"Did he buy it?"

"I think so. He gave me a funny look."

"What did you say?"

"Just what we'd planned. I had the shower on, the bathroom door open a little, and I yelled, 'I'm taking the pizza money from your wallet, okay?' and I waited a bit, and then I said, 'Harold?'"

"You're sure you called my name?"

"That was the point, honey. I didn't forget. And then I shrugged like you couldn't hear me and that was it."

"At 8:15, huh?"

She nodded.

"Okay, good. What time did I get here?"

"About 6:30. We went right to bed, made love, slept a little, and I called for the pizza at a quarter to eight."

"That's perfect," he said, smiling openly for the first time. "We'll make it fine, baby, not a thing to worry about."

"Was it . . ." Susan paused. "Did she suffer at all?"

"No," he answered quickly. He almost wished she had. God knows she made him suffer enough, with that desperate possessiveness of hers. *I love you, Harry*. She would say it over and over and over again until it sounded obscene.

He had loved her years ago when they'd gotten married. Not more than kids out of school, really, though she was out of Vassar and he was out of a small state teachers' college. It hadn't been for her money, though. He'd have married Carol if she'd





been poorer than he was. That way it might have worked.

He'd wanted them to live on his salary and she'd agreed. But before too long it became humiliatingly apparent that he couldn't make enough to satisfy Carol's tastes, and she started dipping into her trust fund. His financial dependence on her grew like a slow cancer, and in three years they were in Manhattan, living in a two-story twelve-room condo, and he was a gentleman of leisure, to whom small-town journalism was and would always be a thing of the past.

The thought that he'd married her for her family's wealth came over Carol only a few months later. And then the questions started.

—Do you really love me? Really?

—Do you know how much I love you?

—Do you know that I would do anything for you?

—Do you love me?

—Do you?

—Do you?

It was a litany that nearly drove him insane. He *did* love her, he told himself, and told her as well. But it was like trying to fill the Grand Canyon with a whisper. No words could have satisfied her, no loving touches or little gifts could have fed that hungry irrational need. And as her need became greater, his ability to fulfill it shrank until her worst fears and suspicions were created by the Frankenstein of her own insecurity.

**T**he women were an afterthought at first. He turned to them like he turned to numismatics, Yankee ball games, the countless films she had no desire to see—as an escape from her cloying possessiveness. But then he met Susan at a Kurosawa festival, and everything had changed. Here, he thought, is the woman I *should* have married, and her response was the same. They met often in large, anonymous hotels, and Harold occasionally drove to her place in Newark.

Carol's paranoia had trebled when Harold started sleeping with Susan. It was as if she could see a fat scarlet A emblazoned on his hairless chest, and it made him nervous. There had been no informant, no seedy private detective with grainy Polaroids. Why then the new string of questions? The pleas? The entreaties?

—Harry, there's something wrong. Won't you tell me what it is?

—Oh, darling, please don't hold anything back from me. Don't you know how much I love you?

—Share with me, Harry. I'll understand. Don't you love me anymore?

No I don't, you grasping bitch! But he never said it.

He could have gotten a divorce easily enough, but in the eight years he'd been married to Carol, he'd grown increasingly fond of the things one could do with money.

The only answer, then, was to kill her.

He had broached the subject with Susan quite delicately, and was relieved to find that she considered it a valid option. The idea of making the death appear suicidal was hers, and Harold had sprung at it. Carol had a reputation among her circle for being neurotic and moody, so a suicide would not come as a great surprise. And his affair with Susan would give Carol an overwhelming motive.

It was perfect. Goodbye, Carol. Go to hell and take that clinging-vine love of yours with you.

"I'm glad."

Susan's words brought him back from his reverie. "What?"

"I'm glad she didn't suffer."

He held her then, and kissed her hard. In a few minutes they were in bed together, and it was good, better than ever before, as if the danger they were about to face had made their lives that much more real, their feelings more intense, so that they clawed at each other in a wish to take it all. It was not so much like making love, he thought oddly, as making hate.

Afterward they couldn't sleep, so they got dressed, ran the cold pizza through the garbage disposal, and threw the empty box and some dirty napkins in a waste can where they could be found later if anyone wanted to look. Then Harold called a garage a few blocks away and told them that he needed a jump-start. They promised to be there in fifteen minutes. He kissed Susan goodbye and went down to the garage to turn on his lights before the truck arrived.

—Yeah, I guess they must have been on since 6:30 or so. No, battery's dead, no use to try it. Just hook it up and I'll start it.

Perfect. And if they told him to try it first, he could always fake its not starting.

Only when he stepped off the elevator he noticed his lights were on for real. He stopped dead and thought for a moment. Could he have done it subconsciously, left them on to give himself a stronger alibi?

Just then a rusted Volkswagen jerked around the corner, a scruffy bearded man behind the wheel. When he saw Harold he slowed and opened his window. "That yours?" he asked. Harold could smell the reek of beer from inside the bug.

"Yeah, it is."

The man shook his head. "Gonna be deader'n shit. I pulled out around seven and they were on then. You want a jump?"

Around seven?

*The little blood  
that had dripped  
on the carpet  
had nearly dried,  
and Carol's skin  
had acquired a waxen  
pallor. The eyes  
had already started  
to sink into themselves.*

"Uh, no, no thanks, there's a service truck coming ... When did you say you saw my lights on?"

"Seven or so."

"Are you sure? I ..." *Don't say too much. He's right. Remember that. He's right.*

"Sure I'm sure!" The voice was testy. "S'when I left for the fuckin' game."

Harold nodded. His heart was pounding and his face felt as if the blood had deserted it.

The man grunted, and the car shot away up and around a corner. Drunk, Harold thought. It must have been more like ten when the man saw his car. Drunk, that was all.

In a few minutes the service truck pulled into the garage. There was no reason to fake, though—the Jaguar's battery was actually dead. It was charged quickly enough by the truck's heavy-duty job, and Harold wrote the mechanic a personal check. Then he drove back to Manhattan.

His watch glowed 12:14 as he turned off the ignition in the garage beneath his building. He walked in the front door, exchanged a few purposeful pleasantries with Sam the doorman (including a dirty joke Sam would be sure to remember), and rode up to his apartment.

Carol was still there. The little blood that had dripped on the carpet had nearly dried, and her skin had acquired a waxen pallor. The eyes, partially open, had already started to shrink into themselves. Harold shuddered and called the police.

A small army entered the room twenty minutes later, and a detective named Tompkins took Harold into the den. While the army clicked and measured and probed in the living room, Tompkins did the same to Harold's brain.

Harold played it exactly as planned—no, he left hours ago. Where was he? He couldn't really say. Don't hold anything back, Mr. Dodge, don't try to protect anyone or it could be bad for you. Do you really have to know, Lieutenant? A woman, Mr. Dodge? (A nod from Harold, a patented understanding smile from Tompkins.) We've got to know who, sir. I understand, I understand.

And then the details—the place, the name, what was done, what was said, who was seen, and we can keep this private, can't we, Lieutenant? Of course,

but you understand, we have to check. It's routine. Surely, Lieutenant, I understand. Could we have a recent photograph of yourself, sir? It'll be returned. (Check away, check away, boyo, and if you catch me I'm dumb enough to deserve it.)

They took Carol away then, and Harold went to bed. He felt slightly ill, as much at Tompkins's close examination as at any guilt he felt, but he was exhausted as well, and slept soundly.

The phone woke him at ten in the morning. The memories of the night before jolted him into consciousness, and his voice was crisp and unfogged when he answered.

"Harry?" Susan's voice. "I just heard. The police were here. Oh, Harry, how awful!"

At first he wondered what she meant, but then he realized she probably suspected a phone tap. Smart girl, he thought. Worth killing for.

"I know," he said, playing the game. "It was such a shock to ... to find her like that. Horrible." His voice choked dramatically.

"I've got to see you, Harry. Got to talk to you about ... us."

*Careful there, love. Don't overdo it.*

"All right. I need some fresh air. How about the park? Fifty-ninth Street entrance." No bugs there.

"Fine. Give me an hour, okay?"

"All right. Goodbye, love." He hung up and took a shower. The phone rang again as he finished toweling himself dry.

"Mr. Dodge," the voice said, "this is Lieutenant Tompkins. We checked up on your story, sir, and it all fits."

"You talked to Miss Denton?"

"Yes sir, we did. Now that in itself wouldn't be enough to establish an alibi, considering your relationship with her, but the kid who delivered the pizza identified your photo ..."

"He ..."

"... and one of Miss Denton's neighbors saw you enter the building around 6:30. That, with the testimony of the serviceman who started your car, puts you in the clear, since time of death was determined to be about 8:30."

"A neighbor ..."

"Yeah. Uh ..." Paper rustled over the line. "... Mrs. Staedelmeyer. Sixtyish widow. You helped her on the elevator with groceries, she said."

"I ..." *What the hell!* "Oh yes! Yes, I remember now ..."

*Is he trying to trick me? Entrapment?*

"I just wanted to let you know it was okay. I'm sure you have enough on your mind. There'll undoubtedly be a ruling of suicide, but since she didn't leave a note, we've got to look into all the possibilities. You understand."

"Yeah. Yes, thank you, Lieutenant."

"Thank you, Mr. Dodge. We'll get back to you soon."

Harold hung up, his mind whirling. *Jesus, the pizza kid? Mrs. ... what was it, Staedelmeyer? What's going on here?*

It had to be a trick, he thought, and he'd been goddamn stupid enough to fall for it.

—There is no Mrs. Staedelmeyer, Mr. Dodge. And the pizza kid never saw you or heard your voice, just the shower running. You want to tell us about it now?

*Asshole!* There were probably a couple of detectives on their way up now!

Harold dressed frantically and practically fell down the fire stairs. All he could think of was finding Susan, finding out what the hell went wrong. He emerged breathlessly from the stairwell onto the street and began dogging the seven blocks to Fifty-ninth Street. He entered the park and waited, watching the entrance from behind some thick trees. When Susan arrived, he made his way through the trees to several yards from where she stood looking for him.

"Susan!" he hissed. A crosstown bus drowned out his voice. "Susan!" he called louder, and she turned toward him.

"Harry!" she said. "What are you doing in there?" She walked toward him, but he stopped her with a gesture.

"Are you being followed?" he asked.

"Followed? No, why?"

"Why?" he repeated, then impatiently gestured for her to join him. When she did, he grabbed her arm roughly and dragged her deeper into the trees. "What did they ask you? What did you say?"

She seemed confused. "Why are you so upset? I told them you were with me. That was what *you* told them, wasn't it?"

"Of course! But what's this about the pizza guy seeing me? And this Mrs. Staedelmeyer?"

"I told that Lieutenant about them ..."

"Why? Jesus Christ, why did you do that?"

"Harry, you're hurting me! Let go!"

She wrenched away from him and he could see the pale marks where his fingers had dug into her arm. "Why did you do that!" he roared.

"I ... I thought it would help ..."

"Help? That cop tricked me today because of your goddamn help! How the hell could you be so fucking stupid as to make up such an obvious lie?"

She shook her head back and forth slowly, her face drawn into a puzzled grimace that reminded him of Carol's death rictus. "A lie? ..."

"Yeah!" he barked. "Yeah! A lie! You know? The things that get you *caught*?"

She still looked confused, but the determined independence that had first drawn him to her was coming to the fore. "What are you talking about, Harry? What lie?"

He heaved an exasperated sigh. "The pizza boy didn't see me, for Chrissake, and I don't even know who the hell this Mrs. Staedelmeyer is. Tompkins caught me on it—he fucking well *caught* me!"

Now she looked concerned, and there was a trace of sympathy in her eyes that Harold couldn't understand. "Harry," she said quietly, "now you listen to me. I know you must be upset by this, and maybe you even feel guilty after what we talked about and ... and even planned. But there's no reason to now. She was unbalanced, you know that. And you know that that boy saw you when you came out of the bathroom ..."

"What are you ..."

"And you know that you helped that woman with her bags, Harry—I saw you with her when I opened the door for you."

"No, you ..." Harold stopped and looked around, sudden suspicion turning his ruddy cheeks pale. "Where?" he whispered, his eyes darting. "Where are they?"

"Who?"

"The police, whoever, the people following you ..."

"Harry," her voice was shaking as if she might suddenly cry. "Harry, there's nobody else here."

"Then why are you *saying these things*!" He started to hyperventilate then, and grabbed his head in both hands, trying to press the nausea back inside along with the fear that coated him like dry sweat. When Susan touched him he gasped at the contact, and she stepped quickly away. For a full two minutes he stood there shaking, gasping for sanity until he fell to his knees and rolled slowly over onto the grass, the feathered sunlight slapping his flushed face through the leafy branches overhead.

When he opened his eyes, Susan was standing looking down at him, a frightened tear rolling down her left cheek.

"What time?" he said, his voice quieter now, flatly calm. "What time did I get there last night?"

She swallowed before she answered. "Six-thirty."

"And what time did the pizza come?"

"Eight ... eight-fifteen."

When he looked at her face he knew she was not lying.

He lay there for a long time before he spoke again. When he did, it was so low that Susan had to kneel to hear.

"What? What did you say?"

"I killed her," he repeated.

"No. No, it wasn't your fault."



"I was there. I shot her. You know that."

"You were with me."

"I was with her."

Susan rose. Her shoulders were hunched, her hands limp. "Call me," she said. "I'm going home. Call me later today."

He didn't answer.

"Will you do that?" She waited a moment longer, then turned and walked away, out into the roaring of Fifty-ninth Street.

After a while he stood up and walked out onto the street himself. He traversed the seven blocks as though in a dream, nearly getting hit by a cab as he crossed Sixty-fifth against the light. He didn't look to see if people were following him. He was afraid they weren't.

As soon as he entered the apartment he noticed the note peeking slyly from under the chair in which he had shot her. It would have been impossible for the police to have overlooked it the previous night. It read:

My Dear Harold—

I have decided to take my own life. My constant depression is more than I can bear, and it is not fair that it ruin your life as well. Be happy, my love.

Your loving Carol

It was unmistakably his wife's handwriting.

He slumped into the chair, the note held tightly in his trembling fingers. It was the last piece of the puzzle that made up his perfect alibi, but there was no feeling of elated relief in him. Instead there was the numbness of dislocation, of sanity sliding under the door. One-word questions pattered like boiling raindrops inside his skull—*How? Why? Who?*

But he knew who.

He found her other note taped to the mirror

on the medicine cabinet in the bathroom when he went for his pills. It was as if she knew he'd need them.

Darling Harold,

I love you, and have always. I don't know why you did what you did, why you felt it was necessary to end it that way. You should have talked to me, told me what you felt. I would have understood. I understand you far better than you know.

You've never realized how much I love you. Now you'll know. I loved you enough to die for you. I knew what you intended. Even though you wouldn't tell me, wouldn't share with me, I could see it.

Women have died for men before. But has a woman ever died at a man's hands and come back to bless him with safety, to guard him with innocence? That is what I've done for you, to show you the depth of my love. I have given you, my murderer, innocence of my death.

Is that enough?

Do you love me now?

Do you?

Do you?

Then share with me. Love me. Be with me. You can.

Open the cabinet.\*

His tongue was dry, and he thought that he had stopped breathing. He looked at the door of the cabinet and saw his own face reflected palely in the neon glow. He already looked like a dead man.

His fingers touched the metal knob of the cabinet, then hesitated. He looked back at the note and wondered if those words at the bottom had been there before.

I would do anything for you.

The cabinet door slid back noiselessly. The straight razor sat alone on the bottom shelf, a cobra ready to spring. His hand captured it and it glittered in the white light.


There were more words on the note. He could see them forming now.

Share with me. Love me. I need your love.

His whisper was ragged and choked. "My love was nothing—it was a lie ..."

And then he heard Carol's voice in his ear as something gently raised his arm with the razor so that the edge touched his throat, cold as ice, hot as flame ...

"Mine wasn't."

... drawing it across his skin like a bow across a cello's strings as the love song softly dies away. 

# The Doomsday Poems

## The Pilgrimage

Across a flaming desert's sun-scorched ways  
I journeyed far into a land unknown  
And found a crumbling fane of night-black stone  
Crouching beneath the white sun's baleful rays.  
Softly I entered into that grim place—  
My footsteps echoed dimly in the gloom—  
And then I knelt and read those words of doom  
Whose crumbling letters marked the altar's face.

"Who would destroy the world," the carving said,  
"Must throw the lever set atop this altar."  
Anon I rose, amazed by what I'd read,  
Then climbed the stone with steps that did not falter—  
Stood there a moment, pondering at length—  
Then cast the lever back with all my strength!

## Hope

The world's a dead harlot—the corpse of a slut  
Where Death-vultures settle to rend and to glut  
While Man flounders blind in the gloom—  
And Hope's a mirage on a desert of sand  
Where horrors go ravaging over the land,  
And life's but the road to doom.

But Hope has a gentle and beckoning face  
That smiles as it shines through the blackness of space  
Like the gleam of a silvery star—  
Yet the glimmer we follow leads not to the light  
But to dreadful escarpments that rise in the night  
Where the Vultures wing in from afar.

'Tis the piper of Hope makes us valiant and bold  
For the sport of the gods, lest too soon we behold  
The Creator's horrendous frown.  
In the vastness of night a lost child ever screams—  
But the Devil still beckons us on with dreams  
Till the Lord God smites us down.

## The Madness of the Oracle

Fools that you were, to ask this sage of mankind's fate!  
Now shall you learn of things that should not be—  
Of Those who lurk in space-hid gulfs, or wait  
Beneath the sea.

Through all the lands the ape-swarms of mankind  
go teeming,  
Their trivial minds in ignorance secure—  
Yet even now the Old Ones cease their dreaming  
And darkly stir . . .

Hark to the sky resounding as a roaring drum!  
Hark—for the Old Ones wake from age-long slumber,  
And from the crimson dawn, on wings of thunder,  
Their minions come!

Lo, in the flaming skies the Gates are opening wide—  
Hark to the doom-trump's blast, the doom-knell's tolling!  
Now on the quaking shores are roaring tides  
In thunder rolling.

Fools, did you dream your gods would grant you  
bliss unending,  
Or that the world was made a stage for men?  
Fools!—for the Night Eternal is descending—  
They rise again!



by Richard L. Tierney

## To Great Cthulhu

The moonlight strikes the waves with waning shafts,  
Making a million eyes wink evilly  
From undulating facets of the sea,  
While landward curls a thickening mist that wafts  
Vague scents that bend the dreams of sleeping men  
Down nightmare paths bypassing space and time—  
To primal fanes that rise from layered slime  
Where dreams the One who waits to rise again.

O mighty Dreamer!—when the impending stars  
Shall make to rise from out the haunted sea  
Thine age-encrusted throne, and cause anew  
Thine awful hate to wake and the old scars  
Of Earth to burst asunder, grant to me  
The vengeance tendered to thy chosen few!

## Optimism

Scanning the pathways of the past, I see  
But broken, twisted trails of blood and slime;  
Blood from a billion springs of war and crime  
Reddens the stream of mankind's history.  
Spewed from the seething pits of savagery  
The hateful ape, claiming God's form sublime,  
Ascends with flame and steel the rungs of time,  
Swelling his soul with pomp and butchery.

Yet, lo!—perchance the black, chaotic past  
Fades to the dawning of a bright new age  
When pain and cruelty will end at last:  
A flash of white illumines the crimson page  
As o'er the red horizon, high and proud,  
Expand the billows of a mushroom-cloud.

## This Great City

From these still-verdant hills whereon I stand  
I hear the jets come thundering in, and see  
For mile on mile the clutter and debris  
Of this great city sprawled across the land.  
Once was this stricken valley green and fair—  
When Red Men lived and roamed amid the oaks—  
That now in factoried foulness seethes and smokes,  
Spreading gray palls of haze upon the air.

Great City sprawled beneath your pall of gloom,  
Spew forth your noisome haze while yet you may—  
That cloud foreshadows your impending doom.  
New thunders shall usurp your skies one day,  
And monstrous fires atomic shall congeal  
The sundered atoms of your glass and steel!

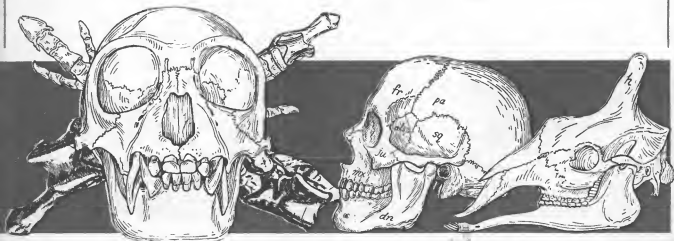
## To the Hydrogen Bomb

O Mushroom-cloud unfolding o'er the world,  
No terrors in my soul do you inspire;  
Within this breast a dreadful hate lies furled,  
Hotter by far than your atomic fire.

Beneath your shadow some crouch down in fear  
(Though most still go their mundane, maudlin ways),  
But I await the day when all shall hear  
Your crashing peal and char beneath your rays.

I wait—for when your thunder shakes the skies  
And blasts the towering cities to the sands,  
Then you, like to a new-born Sun, shall rise  
And blaze your radiance forth to all the lands!

Within the whiteness of your fiery core  
The dawning of a brighter age I see—  
When, in the crescendo of all-ending War,  
Mankind shall all be gathered unto thee.



# All of Us Are Dying

by George Clayton Johnson

THIS FIENDISHLY ORIGINAL TALE—ABOUT A MOST UNUSUAL TALENT—BECAME THE BASIS OF A NOW-CLASSIC *TWILIGHT ZONE* EPISODE, 'THE FOUR OF US ARE DYING.'

**H**e drove into the strange new town, parked the car in front of the hotel on Main Street, and climbed out.

"Sam!" said a voice. "Sam Windgate!"

A heavyset man in a dark suit was bustling toward him with his hand outstretched.

His response was automatic. He clapped the man on the back and pumped his hand. "It's good to see you again," he said fervently. "I'm in a hurry now, but I'll look you up when I finish."

"I'm in the book, Sam," said the man, and grinned.

He entered the hotel. At the cigar counter he stopped to buy a pack of cigarettes. The girl behind the glass case smiled warmly as she turned toward him. Seeing his face, the smile died.

"It's Fred, isn't it?" she said. "Fred Black."

He looked at her, not saying anything.

"You look strange," she said. "Didn't you expect me to remember you?"

He remained quiet, searching her face.

"Did you expect me to forget the things you said? The promises you made?"

"Of course not," he said.

"I don't understand how you would dare come back here after everything that happened."

"And yet," he said, "here I am."

"Yes," she said, "here you are."

He reached out to touch her hand where it rested on the glass case. She drew it back. He tried a tentative smile. She flushed and moistened her lips with her tongue.

"There is a reason why I came back." His eyes traveled boldly over her body.

"It's too late," she said, looking away.

"Perhaps not," he said.

Her eyes met his, becoming large and moist, before she turned away to busy herself with the stock behind the counter.

He walked out of the hotel.

At the Wagon Wheel Cafe where he went to lunch, the waitress came up to the table briskly. "Ben!" she said. "Ben Hoffmier!"

He pushed a smile onto his lips and looked up.

"Well," she said, bending over him. "When did you get in town?" She was close enough for him to smell the clean soap smell of her skin.

"Just arrived," he said.

"Where's Evie? Have you still got that diner at Grosse Point?"

"Here, here," he said easily. "One thing at a time."

She swiped at the table with a damp cloth, rubbing her body against his shoulder.

While she talked, his mind was busy sorting out the words, the tones, the inflections, weighing them, assigning them values.

"I left Evie behind this time. You know how it is."

"Sure," she said. "Do you remember the awful way she acted when she found us together?" Her hands brushed his on the dark table top. "That's the first time I got fired from a job in my whole life."

"Forget about Evie," he said.

"Sure," she said. "Now you just sit here while I bring you the special. For you, it's on the house." She swirled away in a rustle of starched clothing.

He saw a man eyeing him from a counter stool. *And what's your special guilt?* he thought.

On his way out he waved at the waitress.

"I get off at eight," she said.

**B**ack at the hotel, he smiled at the girl behind the cigar counter. She turned away coldly.

He deliberated with himself for a time before crossing to the registration desk. "One single," he said.

In his room he stripped off his coat and shirt. He picked up the telephone and asked to be connected with the cigar counter. He listened to the connection being made.

"This is Fred," he said into the mouthpiece. He lowered his voice to a husky whisper. "I have something to tell you, if you'll listen. Will you meet me someplace?"

He held the receiver to his ear, listening, while a smile grew on his face. He replaced the instrument in its cradle, lay back on the bed, and looked at the ceiling for a while before falling asleep.

It was getting dark. Through the window he could see the sign winking on and off: BAR—BAR—BAR! He took out his wallet and checked its contents. He saw he was getting short on funds. He





## All of Us Are Dying

put on his shirt and coat, ran a comb through his hair, and went out.

In the lobby the cigar counter was closed.

As he entered the bar, he paused to get his bearings. To his left was a long bar. He saw the girl from the cigar counter. She sat at the far end, a drink in front of her. To his right were booths with small tables between them and the bar. In the back were the restrooms and a small office. The jukebox ran deafeningly.

He walked along the bar holding his face carefully relaxed, listening to the wash of sound.

"Hey, isn't that Mike Grover?"

"Who?"

"You remember Mike, the dispatcher?"

He steered his way closer to the table.

"Naw, doesn't look anything like him."

"That's Grover all right. Hey, Mike!"

He looked up as though startled. He let the smile spread over his face as he came up to the table. Three roughly dressed men sat around a half-empty bottle of Old Crow.

"Say," he said. "Where did you guys come from? How long has it been?"

"Pull up a chair, Mike. You remember Eddie Walsh, and this here is Barney Koenig. Fellas, this is Mike Grover, the meanest dispatcher who ever worked for the Union Pacific."

"Have a drink," said Eddie. "Harvey ain't got no manners." Eddie pushed an empty glass in front of him. He sloshed liquor into the glass. "You still with the U.P.?"

"You know what they say about old soldiers," he said. He wondered if anyone at the table had money.

"Boy, we had some times together, didn't we?" said Harvey. "Remember the time we took old Swenson the super out and got him tight? I bet he's still wondering how he come to wake up at Essie Kuppenheimer's."

"Yeah," he said, smiling.

"And the next day he tells his old lady that he had to go to Denver on business." Harvey laughed boisterously.

He smiled brightly and then let the expression change to one of sadness.

"Something wrong, Mike?"

"I just remembered," he said sadly. "I was supposed to stop at the bank this afternoon and make a withdrawal. Completely slipped my mind. I've got some things to do tonight and I haven't got a cent on me."

"How much do you need?" asked Harvey. "I've got some dough."

"I can let you have it back tomorrow."

"Will twenty be enough?"

He looked doubtful.

Harvey had his wallet out. "Here, take thirty bucks. You can leave it with the bartender and I can pick it up tomorrow night."

He took the money with a pained expression on his face. "I appreciate this, Harvey."

"S'all right. Seeing you was worth it. Man, some of the times we had—those were the days." He slapped him on the shoulder. "Have another drink?"

"Next time, huh? It's getting late and I have a lot to do."

"If you can't be good, be careful," said Harvey slyly. "Don't spend it all at Essie's."

As he came abreast of the girl she slipped lightly from the stool. Her hair was brushed away from her face and she looked shy and troubled. "Fred..." she said tentatively.

He put his arm protectively about her shoulder. "Let's go where we can talk."

He moved her toward the door. Outside, the brisk breeze came down on them. She shivered, looking up at him, searching his face.

"You've changed, Fred," she said.

"Yes," he said. He took her arm and began to walk toward the hotel.

In his room she turned to him, her arms going around his neck. "Oh, Fred," she said.

"Yes, yes," he said huskily. He bent over her, his hands touching her, cupping her.

Almost feverishly she pulled away. "When you left I thought I'd go crazy. I kept telling myself that you would come back, and when you didn't, I began to hate you. Alone at night I worked out the things I would say to you if I ever met you again. I began to look in the mirror, wondering what there was about me that made you leave. I'd take off my clothes and look at myself in the mirror."

"It wasn't that," he said. He pulled her to him again, his hand expertly finding the zipper on her dress. He kissed her cheek and her lips.

"And then I thought, maybe I did something wrong. I remembered our nights together, recalling each detail, remembering each touch and each kiss." Her breath came warmly in his ear.

"Nor that," he said. The dress fell away. He pressed his face against her neck, tasting her flesh.

"And then I thought that maybe there was another woman," she said breathlessly. Her hands climbed up and down his spine.

"None as dear as you," he whispered. He picked her up and carried her to the bed.

"You won't ever leave me again?" she asked tremulously.

His clothing fell in a heap beside the bed.

"Never," he said, and then he joined her on the clean sheets.

"I was wrong," she said at last in a small sub-

If he held his head  
cocked so, he looked  
like Charlie Brice.  
If he smiled thus, he  
looked like Billie Warner.  
If he frowned and  
lowered his eyebrows,  
he was Pud.

dued voice touched with awe and wonder. "You haven't changed at all. You're still the same Fred Black that I remember so very well."

Lying there, he tried to remember how it had all started. He'd done all the normal boyish things the other kids did. And then he was twelve and things changed—not with the kids, because they knew who he was and couldn't be fooled, but everything changed with the grown-ups. They were always confusing him with the other kids. They'd call up his mother with strange stories.

"Are you calling Mrs. Kelling a liar?" his mother would ask, a switch in her hand. "She saw you and that awful Grenfeld boy breaking her milk bottles. How many times have I told you to keep away from him?"

"But Mom ..."

"You know better than that," his mother would say, and then she would switch him.

One night, standing before the mirror in his bathroom, he looked long and searchingly into his face and discovered his secret. If he held his head cocked so, he looked like Charlie Brice. If he smiled thus, he looked like Billie Warner. If he frowned and lowered his eyebrows, he was Pud.

At first he had been delighted with the discovery. He'd go down the street wearing his mask, and people would say, "Hi, Pud," or, "Hey, Billie!" and then he'd smile and hug himself.

Suddenly he was sixteen and all this was kid stuff. He wanted to be noticed for himself, not Charlie or Pud. He'd be careful not to cock his head to the side or lower his eyebrows, and then strangers would say, "Hey Keith," or, "Hello, Wendel." Then he'd stand still on the sidewalk, trying to remember his name.

He found that when he corrected people who wrongly identified him, it hurt their feelings. They would flush and stammer and sometimes they would get angry. What did it matter, he told himself. If they got pleasure out of thinking he was someone else, why spoil it for them. At the end of each day, his face stiff from nodding and smiling, he'd go home and in his dreams he would hear a flood of voices calling him Jack or Bart or Brad.

One day a man walked up to him in front of Seeger's clothing store and said, "Here, Evans.

Here's the twenty I owe you." He pressed a bill into his hands and walked away.

The next day he packed up his clothes and left town. He was twenty-one. He discovered he had old friends in every town always good for a free meal, a place to stay, or a loan of money.

It was fun.

Except on those bad days when he'd sit in a drab hotel room dreaming of a job and a family and an identity that wouldn't flow and shift like mercury.

One day he bought a little black book just to keep track of the "loans" and the "gifts," to find that they averaged ten thousand a year. Why be a sap? Where else could he make that kind of money with his education and skill?

He remembered it all and fell asleep thinking of the next morning, when he would get in his car and drive away to another town where it would begin all over again.

When he woke, the girl was gone. Passing through the hotel lobby, he saw her standing behind the glass case. A look of disappointment creased her face as he went by without looking at her.

He had breakfast at the Wagon Wheel Cafe, listening to the waitress. He made glib conversation while he ate heartily.

Driving out of town, he saw the service station. He cramped the wheels to the left, driving across the white line, and pulled up beside the pumps.

The attendant came out from inside, moving slowly, peering toward him.

"Fill it up," he said, and stopped.

"You!" screamed the attendant. "Arthur Danyluk! I've been looking for you for ten years!"

He felt himself being hauled out into the driveway. His head glanced off of the pump as he fell to his knees. "No!" he thought foggily. Terrified, he tried to roll away from the kicking feet.

The attendant had wrenched the gasoline hose from its socket in the pump and had the heavy nozzle poised high in the air. "I swore I'd kill you!" mouthed the attendant, stretching up on his tiptoes. He brought the nozzle down.

It caught him crushingly across the shoulders. He stiffened convulsively, his face gone dead, becoming a strange face, a distinctive face.

"Please," he sobbed. "I'm not who you think. My name is ... is ..." He searched vainly for the name. Who was he? He didn't know at first, and then he did.

Too late. The nozzle flailed high and started its downward rush.

He was Ben Hoffmire. He was Fred Black. He was Mike Grover. He was Arthur Danyluk. And all of them were dying. 17



# The Four of Us Are Dying

by Rod Serling

THE ORIGINAL  
TELEVISION SCRIPT  
FIRST AIRED ON CBS-TV  
JANUARY 1, 1960

## T Z C L A S S I C T E L E P L A Y

### CAST

Arch Hammer.....Harry Townes  
Hammer as Foster.....Ross Martin  
Hammer as Sterig.....Phillip Pine  
Hammer as Marshak...Don Gordon  
Maggie.....Beverly Garland  
Pop Marshak.....Peter Brocco  
Penell.....Bernard Fein  
Detective.....Milton Frome

### FADE ON:

#### 1. EXT. SKY NIGHT

Shot of the sky ... the various nebulae, and planet bodies stand out in sharp, sparkling relief. As the

CAMERA begins a SLOW PAN across the Heavens—

#### NARRATOR'S VOICE (o.s.)

There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow—between science and superstition. And it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call the Twilight Zone.

The CAMERA has begun to PAN DOWN until it passes the horizon and is flush on the OPENING SHOT.

#### 2. EXT. STREET NIGHT ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP TOWARD A MAN

As he walks toward the camera. On either side are flashing neon signs, bar signs, burlesque signs, dance halls, etc. There's blaring, dissonant jazz that plays under the entire moment as the man continues his walk.

**3. TILT SHOT  
HOTEL SIGN**

As the man enters the hotel.

CUT TO:

**4. TILT SHOT  
THE REGISTER**

As over it a clerk hands him a pen. The music continues blaring underneath.

**5. EXTREMELY TIGHT  
CLOSE SHOT MAN'S  
FACE**

As he signs his name in the register. This is a medium young face, nondescript as to any particular type person. Just a face. He could be a salesman or a plumber or an aircraft designer.

**6. TILT SHOT TWO BAGS**

Being carried by a somewhat aging bellboy across a lobby.

**7. TILT SHOT HOTEL  
ROOM DOOR**

As it opens. The man enters followed by the bellboy.

DISSOLVE TO:

**8. INT. HOTEL ROOM  
NIGHT**

The staccato pace of the previous scene is now slowed down and the mood is no longer stylized. The CAMERA PANS ACROSS the room toward an open door leading to the bathroom then DOLLIES IN toward the bathroom. The man is in his undershirt lathering his face, his back obscuring the reflection of his face in the mirror. Then the CAMERA ARCS to the left so that we're on a shot of the man's face in the mirror covered with lather, only the eyes and forehead are completely definable.

NARRATOR'S VOICE (o.s.)

His name is Arch Hammer. He's thirty-six years old. He's been a salesman, a truck driver, a con man, a bookie, and a part-time bartender.

Now the man starts to shave and strips of lather come off with each swipe of the razor.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

This is a cheap man. A nickle and dime man with a cheapness that goes past the suit and the shirt; a cheapness of mind. A cheapness of taste. A tawdry little shine on the seat of his conscience and a darkroom squint at a world whose sunlight has never gotten through to him.

A pause now as the CAMERA STARTS TO DOLLY IN toward the reflection in the mirror.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

But Mr. Hammer has a talent discovered at a very early age. This much he does have. He can make his face change. He can twitch a muscle, move a jar, concentrate on the cast of his eyes.

The CAMERA DOLLIES IN VERY TIGHT on the mirror now.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

And he can change his face!  
He can change it into

anything that he wants.

The face in the mirror now alters, first subtly and then completely until it's the face of a different man.

**9. REVERSE ANGLE  
LOOKING TOWARD THE  
MAN**

As if through the mirror as he half-smiles at his reflection. Once again he seems to concentrate.

**10. REVERSE ANGLE  
LOOKING TOWARD  
MIRROR**

His head is down for a moment in the reflection, then he looks up. Now it's yet a different face. The CAMERA STARTS A SLOW DOLLY back into the bedroom until the suitcases are visibly open on the bed. Alongside of them are stacked shirts, underwear, ties, etc. And alongside of them, newspaper clippings.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

Mr. Archie Hammer, jack of all trades, has just checked in at three-eighty a night



# The Four of Us Are Dying

with two bags, some newspaper clippings, a most odd talent ... and a master plan to destroy some lives!

FADE OUT

BILLBOARD  
FIRST COMMERCIAL

FADE ON:

## 11. INT. HOTEL ROOM TILT SHOT THE CLIPPINGS ON THE BED

As one of them is picked up. CAMERA PULLS BACK for shot of Arch Hammer as he studies it, smiles, sticks it in his pocket and starts out of the room.

## 12. MOVING SHOT WITH HIM STILL TILT

As he goes back on the street and once again stylistically he walks down the avenue of neon, the blaring jazz supplying the march music.

## 13. ANGLE SHOT BAR SIGN

CUT TO:

## 14. INT. BAR CLOSE SHOT WOMAN'S HANDS

Playing on a piano keyboard. PULL BACK FOR shot of Maggie as she sings a throaty, bourbon-laden rendition of a blues tune. The voice is more monotone than tuneful but carries with it its own bittersweet poignancy because the woman singing believes the words and feels them. She finishes the song, winds up running a finger across the scales. There's desultory, sporadic applause as she moves away from the piano on the little orchestra stand over to a small table. As she passes, a man reaches up from a table.

MAN

Hey, Mag—  
Maggie deftly pushes his hand aside.

MAGGIE

Hey, sport! Unravel the flesh.

MAN

Drink, Maggie?

MAGGIE

Love one.

(and then to the waiter)

Very solitary.

(points to a booth)

All by my lonesome if you don't mind.

## 15. TRACK SHOT WITH HER

As she goes over to her table and sits down. The waiter brings her a glass. She lifts it, tastes it, puts it down as if playing a game of self-denial. Then she takes the drink. Her eyes move up then open wide. The glass almost falls as she brings it down sharply on the table top.

## 16. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD HER

From the back of a man's head. Then it follows the man as he walks over to the table. From behind it's Arch Hammer. The suit's the same. The walk. The stance. The dimensions.

CUT TO:

## 17. MED. SHOT THE TABLE

As he arrives. The face isn't Arch Hammer's. It's that of a man named John Foster. There's a physical similarity. Both medium tall. Both dark. Both strong featured, but it's a different face, obviously, undeniably different. Maggie stares at him as he sits down quietly next to her. She sends out a trembling hand on an assault of the glass and spills a little as she starts to take it toward her mouth. Foster's hand reaches out, takes her wrist, forces the glass down again.

FOSTER

If you don't drink well,  
don't drink.

MAGGIE

(her voice trembling)

Johnny. Johnny, are you a ghost?

FOSTER

(laughs softly)

Sure, a ghost. I just came down to check the mourners. Read the obituaries.

(he reaches over and touches her cheek with a fingertip)

How did they feel about the deceased? What kind of tears? Big ones the size of bubbles or the kind that come from onions in handkerchiefs?

She grabs his hand, squeezes it, holds it as if desperate to keep him there.

MAGGIE

You came to the right place, Johnny. I got a roomful of buckets. I heard it on the radio one night. Just like that. First there was a dance band. Then there was a newscast. There you were right in the middle of the Vice President in Russia and a streetcar strike. Death, as it must to all men, came to talented musician Johnny Foster. Tragic accident. Train hitting car. And I just sat there and I listened ... and I cried. And then I ... I washed my face and put on makeup and went to work.

(a pause and she shakes her head)

But everything had changed for me. My repertoire became very limited. Only blues. Only sad songs for piano and bourbon.

(she suddenly kisses his hand)

I don't care if you are a ghost. You're good to the touch. Very firm article.

(then she looks into his eyes)

You've been missed, Johnny Foster.

FOSTER

(massages her fingers)

That's good to hear.

(then he smiles)

It was another guy. My car, my suit. Maybe we had the same dentist, too.



#### MAGGIE

Why didn't you tell people that—

#### FOSTER

(shakes his head, cutting her off)

I wanted a vacation from the world.

He points toward the bandstand where a small combo has begun to play.

#### 18. MED. CLOSE SHOT TRUMPET PLAYER

Who plays some muted jazz.

#### 19. TWO SHOT THE TWO OF THEM

#### FOSTER

From that. I decided I'd hock the name, turn it in on something new. Something different.

#### MAGGIE

You were always a funny guy, Johnny. Way out Johnny Foster.

(then she stares at him intently and releases his hand)

Well, are you satisfied with the reaction? Tears big enough? What holds you now?

#### FOSTER

I was in Chicago and I

picked up a Sunday paper. What do they call it—the rotogravure section? One page they called human interest pictures.

(he repeats this, smiling)

Human interest pictures. You know the pitch? Little boys with run-over dogs. Sweet old ladies getting evicted on sidewalks.

Then there was a picture of a beautiful lady who sang the blues.

(he leans over and touches her)

It reminded me, Maggie . .

it reminded me that there were little pieces of my past

I didn't want to slough off.

(he looks her up and down, there's an undisguised hunger in the look)

Mourning becomes you, Mag.

#### MAGGIE

(with a little laugh that has no humor in it)

Me and Electra. So how long are you with us? Is this a stop between trains, Johnny?

#### FOSTER

In a way for me it is. For you, get out of town night. You've got time for about six choruses and a check-out.

(he holds her hands again)

You're going to come with me, Mag. We'll go to Chicago or Detroit. We'll go to San Francisco. We'll have a ball, Mag. Everything by ear. But great, Maggie. I mean great. The two of us.

#### 20. CLOSE SHOT MAGGIE

There's more than delight registering. More than a kind of exploding happiness that seems to burst out of her eyes. It's salvation, relief, and a ticket to paradise.

#### MAGGIE

Hey, Johnny, I love you.

Tell me we've got to go to Scranton and play piano in a coal mine, I'm for it. And tell me to go up to the moon in a bathing suit . . . I'm your girl. You name it, Johnny. You got it.

#### 21. TWO SHOT

He rises along with her and she melts into his arms.

#### MAGGIE

I love you, Johnny Foster.

When you were gone, they had a ghost doing the vocals. The shell of a lady at a piano. The lyrics were just echoes, Johnny, that somebody sang before.

She gives him a long, passionate, all-giving kiss and then runs her hands over his face.

#### MAGGIE

You make me real again, Johnny. You put me back on earth. Hey, Johnny, you put me back together again and I love you, Johnny. Johnny, I love you.

They kiss again.

#### FOSTER

You finish up. Tell them you're cutting out. I'll meet you at the railroad station. I'll get the tickets, Twelve-o-six, Mag. Westbound to Chicago. Be there?

# The Four of Us Are Dying

She stares into his eyes, her mouth open as if trying to form the kind of skyscraper words that can do justice to the way she feels, then she gives up and shakes her head with a little smile.

MAGGIE

Be there, Johnny.

He kisses her on the cheek.

## 22. TRACK SHOT WITH HIM

As he walks away.

## 23. MED. CLOSE SHOT TRUMPET PLAYER

On the little bandstand who suddenly, in the middle of a riff, blows one loud, discordant toot and the trumpet goes out of his mouth as he stares toward Foster. His eyes bug.

TRUMPET PLAYER

Johnny! Hey, man!

## 24. DIFFERENT ANGLE FOSTER

As he continues to walk past. He tosses the trumpet player a salute. The Trumpet Player rises, still bug-eyed.

TRUMPET PLAYER

Hey, Johnny. Like ... like didn't you tangle with the Union Pacific? Hey, man ... I thought you was out of the world.

## 25. MOVING SHOT FOSTER

As he smiles and goes toward the front door.

## 26. MED. CLOSE SHOT BARTENDER

He's pouring a daiquiri into a woman's glass sitting at the bar. His eyes go bug and he continues to pour onto the bar three inches to the left of the glass as he stares toward Foster.

GIRL

Hey, Herman Ox! What do I look like - a cat?

She points toward the glass and the daiquiri flowing over the bar.

BARTENDER

(ignoring her, calls out)

Hey, Johnny! Hey, Johnny Foster!

## 27. MOVING SHOT FOSTER

As he goes out the front door.

## 28. EXT. STREET NIGHT

Again, we're on a stylized impressionistic set with the neon lights and the jazz music. Foster takes out a cigarette and puts it in his mouth. The door to the bar behind him opens. The Trumpet Player comes out and stands at Foster's elbow. Foster's face is averted and can only be seen in indistinct, dark outline.

TRUMPET PLAYER

Johnny baby! We all got the wrong word. They said you got removed by a locomotive. Oh, Johnny, it's good to see you. Here, let me give you a light -

He takes out a match, holds it up to Foster's face as he turns toward him.

## 29. CLOSE SHOT TRUMPET PLAYER'S FACE

As he suddenly gapes.

## 30. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD FOSTER'S FACE

He's back to being Arch Hammer.

HAMMER

I'll take the light ... but you got the wrong boy.

He takes the Trumpet Player's hand to move the match over to the cigarette and gets his light. Then he pushes the Trumpet Player's hand back. The match burns the man's fingers and he suddenly shakes it out and licks the fingertips. This has been an unnerving, almost shattering experience. The Trumpet Player suddenly jolts himself out of his stare.

TRUMPET PLAYER

Real sorry, buddy. I thought

you were the guy I just seen in the bar. Real sorry.

He backs away, still gaping, and goes back into the bar.

## 31. MED. CLOSE SHOT HAMMER

As he stands there. He draws reflectively on the cigarette.

HAMMER

Why not? A beautiful dame - Why not? I never had a dish like that. I never got loved like that. Why shouldn't I? He blows out a cloud of smoke, turns to look back toward the bar where he can hear Maggie's voice now singing. He smiles.

HAMMER

Yeah, Maggie, yeah ... why not?

He flips the cigarette away and starts back toward the neon as we

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE ON:

## 32. INT. HOTEL ROOM NIGHT

CAMERA PULLS BACK as if shooting through a window and we see the room framed with Arch Hammer standing in the middle of the room looking down at the bed. The jazz music is up again, loud, piercing, dissonant. Clarinet, trumpet, a beating drum. DOLLY IN for medium close shot of Hammer as he picks up another clipping from off the bed, studies it, smiles, tosses it aside. PAN SHOT with him into the bathroom where he stands in front of the mirror.

## 33. MED. CLOSE SHOT HIS REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR

As he stands there sending inquisitive fingers over his face. Again he smiles, then the smile fades as he stares at himself. The CAMERA STARTS A PAN over to his face from the reflection in the mirror and by the time it reaches him





we're shooting on another face, that of Virgil Sterig. This is a tough face, nothing gentle about it, nothing thoughtful or sensitive. This is the face of a hood, plain and simple. The face turns as we

CUT TO:

#### 34. FULL SHOT BEDROOM

As Sterig re-enters the room and goes over to the bed.

#### 35. CLOSE SHOT NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

It's a picture of Sterig with a caption which reads: "Local hoodlum found shot in river."

#### 36. MED. SHOT STERIG

Sterig picks up the clipping and studies it.

STERIG

How was the water, baby, huh? Was it cold? When did it hurt—when you laughed?

He chuckles at the worn joke, crumples up the clipping, throws it back on the bed, goes to the bureau mirror, straightens his tie, then turns, goes out the door.

CUT TO:

#### 37. WALKING SHOT

As once again we're on a stylized journey-down a main

street flanked by neon. The obligato of jazz continues underneath.

#### 38. TILT SHOT SIGN

Which reads, "Armstrong Towers."

CUT TO:

#### 39. ELEVATOR DOORS

Closing with Sterig visible in the elevator just before they close.

#### 40. PAN SHOT UP TO FLOOR INDICATOR

As the arrow starts to move up.

#### 41. TILT SHOT ELEVATOR DOORS

As they open. Sterig comes out.

CUT TO:

#### 42. INT. APARTMENT

We're on the back of a Filipino houseboy as he comes from behind the camera blotting it out for a moment as he heads for the front door to answer the door chimes. He opens the door and Sterig pushes his way past him.

BOY

Excuse me, sir—Mr. Penell is not at home this evening.

#### 43. LONG SHOT STERIG

As he leaves the foyer heading

toward a step-down living room flanked by glass—out of which we can see the city at night.

CUT TO:

#### 44. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE LIVING ROOM

It's sumptuous, ultra-modern, low-slung furniture, with all the appointments. A giant television set carries a night baseball game and Penell, a middle-aged man, sits watching it, smoking a cigarette, and holding a bottle of beer. He turns his head.

PENELL

Who is it, Ramon?

#### 45. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP TOWARD STERIG

As he enters the room.

STERIG

It's me, Mr. Penell.

#### 46. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT PENELL'S FACE

As it suddenly contorts in fear.

#### 47. CLOSE SHOT HIS HAND

As it swings back holding the beer bottle and smashes against the screen of the television set, breaks it into a thousand pieces, then falls to the ground.

#### 48. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN AND ACROSS THE TWO MEN

As they face one another in the big room.

STERIG

Picture tubes—they're expensive. But you can always get yourself another beer. Imported, isn't it? I always liked your taste, Mr. Penell. You always had the taste of a very rich man. Much class, Mr. Penell. Polished. Neat but not gaudy.

Penell makes a motion as if to go toward a massive desk that's across the room. Sterig shoves his hand in his pocket.

# The Four of Us Are Dying

STERIG

Please don't. Just sit down there, Mr. Penell, and we'll talk. We'll have a business meeting, you and me.

Penell opens his mouth and tries to say something and for a moment nothing comes out.

PENELL

Virg . . . Virg, this is the happiest day of my life.

## 49. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT HIS FACE

It looks almost comical with its grotesque attempt at a relieved smile.

## 50. REVERSE ANGLE STERIG

As he laughs and uncontrollably shakes his head back and forth.

STERIG

This is the happiest day of Mr. Penell's life. If you don't believe it—ask him.

(he takes a step toward him)

Mr. Penell—you're a rich man but a lousy actor.

Really . . . a very bad actor.

(he takes another step toward him)

If this is the happiest day of your life—why do you look like somebody just stuck lemon juice in your beer?

(he shakes his head again slowly from side to side)

No, Mr. Penell, you're not so happy. You got no reason to be happy. Believe me, Mr. Penell, I know. You got no reason to be happy. No reason at all. If you could have kept me in that river, just a cold, clammy little item without a voice—

(he nods)  
then you could have been happy! But this is one double cross, Mr. Penell, that came back to bite you! I worked my end of the bargain for you. After the payoff—I got the river.  
(he smiles ever so slightly)

And that river was cold.

Much too cold for this time of year. Lousy swimming, Mr. Penell. Especially when you're almost out of blood.

PENELL

(his voice a hoarse whisper)

Virg—

STERIG

I brought you back a satchel, Mr. Penell. It had a lot of money in it. It was a real risky job. Now I figure my cut is more than a cold swim.

PENELL

Virg, please listen to me.

Would I do a thing like that? Would I give you the double cross? Virg, you're a friend. You're close. You're family, Virg.

(he shakes his head, pointing to his chest like a ham actor)

Virg, you got me wrong. Dead wrong. What was your cut, Virg? Twenty percent wasn't it? I got it right over there in the desk. Virg, it's there for you. It's waiting. I don't know who got to you and shoved you in the river. That wasn't my doing, Virg. I got your cut, kid. It's right over there in the desk—

He makes a motion with his hand followed by a foot. Sterig interposes himself between Penell and the desk.

STERIG

I'll take care of my cut, Mr. Penell.

(he moves over to the desk, looks up)

Which drawer?

PENELL

Center drawer. Envelope full of money. Virg, don't you let me get it for you?

STERIG

Why don't you just shut your mouth?

He reaches inside the drawer, takes out an envelope, looks down at it briefly. It's bulging with money. Then he looks up

again toward Penell with a smile.

STERIG

You said this was mine, didn't you?

PENELL

Twenty percent of it, Virg—

STERIG

The cut's the same, Mr. Penell. I always honor my contracts, but there's interest now. For floating face down in a cold river I charge interest. For getting three holes in my belly I charge interest.

(he holds up the envelope and squeezes it)

I'll take it all.

He shoves it in his pocket, walks back across the room toward the foyer.

## 51. CLOSE SHOT PENELL

As he watches him and then abruptly, impulsively.

PENELL

Virg!

## 52. MED. TWO SHOT

Sterig turns to him.

PENELL

(wetting his lips and blinking his eyes)

Did somebody . . . did somebody fish you out before—

STERIG

(smiles)

Did somebody fish me out before I'd had it? That the question?

(a long pause and he shakes his head)

Why no, Mr. Penell, that's not the way it happened at all.

(with a raised eyebrow and a little grimace of a smile)

I'm a ghost!

He turns and starts into the foyer.

CUT TO:

## 53. FRONT DOOR

As it opens. The Filipino boy



comes in followed by two other men.

**54. CLOSE SHOT STERIG**  
As his eyes go wide in alarm. He makes one mad bull-rush between the two men, knocking them aside and disappearing out the door.

CUT TO:

**55. ENTRANCE TO THE LIVING ROOM**  
Penell appears at a dead run. He screams.

**PENELL**  
Get him! Get that guy. He's a thief!

CUT ABRUPTLY TO:

**56. FLOOR INDICATOR TILT**  
As the arrow moves down.

CUT TO:

**57. TILT SHOT ELEVATOR DOORS**  
As they open and Sterig rushes out.

CUT TO:

**58. EXT. STREET RUNNING SHOT AGAIN STYLIZED STERIG**  
As he runs panting, out of breath, the neon lights flashing by over his head, the sound of other footsteps after him.

CUT TO:

**59. LONG ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN**

As he runs into an alley.

**60. TRACK SHOT WITH HIM**  
As he runs into the alley past brick walls that blur by behind him.

CUT TO:

**61. CLOSE SHOT BRICK WALL**

As he suddenly smashes headlong into it. The force of it knocks him to the ground.

**62. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN AT HIM**

As he shakes his head, momentarily stunned. His eyes open and then look ahead of him, frightened.

**63. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING DOWN LONG DARK ALLEY**

Toward the opening where the two men appear and start toward him.

**64. MED. CLOSE SHOT STERIG**

As he hurriedly gets to his feet, pushing himself up with his back against the wall. He looks around and then up and then almost sobs as he realizes this is an inexorable trap.

**65. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD TWO MEN**

As they continue toward him.

**66. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT STERIG**

The sweat standing out on his face, the eyes dilating, nervously twitching back and forth.

**STERIG**

Got to get out. Got to make it.

(and then suddenly coming upon this in his mind)

Gotta change my face. Gotta look different. Face. Different face. Change my face. Any face. Any face at all. Think of a face. Think of a face—

**67. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD THE TWO MEN AGAIN**

They are much closer, only a few feet away. One of them nods toward the other and the second man pulls out a gun. He looks up sharply as he hears Sterig's voice which is really not Sterig's voice anymore at all. It belongs to a man named Marshak.

**68. PAN SHOT OVER TO BRICK WALL**

There's a bright light shining into Sterig's face which is now Marshak's. The face of a thirty-year-old ex-pug, flat nose, scar tissue over the eyes, close-cropped hair.

**69.-73. SERIES OF SHOTS**

Back and forth between the two men as they look on him with amazement. Man Two lowers his gun.

**MAN TWO**

What the—?

**74. CLOSE SHOT MARSHAK**  
He grins

**MARSHAK**

What did I do? Why are you tryin' to finger me? Huh? What's goin' on? I didn't do nothin' to you guys.

# The Four of Us Are Dying

## 75. MED. SHOT

MAN TWO

(as he puts his gun back in his pocket)

Nothing, buddy. We thought you were somebody else.

He nods his head toward his partner and the two men walk out of the alley.

## 76. CLOSE SHOT MARSHAK

As he starts to laugh, a laugh that builds in intensity and continues as he lurches away from the wall, almost drunk with relief, and starts down the alley.

CUT TO:

## 77. MED. CLOSE SHOT ALLEY ENTRANCE

A wizened little Old Man sells papers at a stand. He watches the two men go by then turns to look toward the alley as suddenly Marshak comes into the light.

## 78. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD OLD MAN

From behind Marshak. The Old Man stares at him white faced, shaken. Marshak reaches into his pocket, takes out a cigarette, lights it, takes a deep, long, luxurious drag, unaware of the Old Man. The Old Man comes out from behind the stand, goes over to him, stops a few feet away.

OLD MAN

Andy!

(a pause)

Andy!

## 79. MED. CLOSE SHOT MARSHAK

As he turns to stare toward the Old Man looking him up and down, no hint of recognition on his face.

MARSHAK

Who?

OLD MAN

Andy. Andy, what's the matter with you?

MARSHAK

Andy?

(he suddenly touches his face, conscious of the fact that he's changed it)

Oh ... oh, yeah. Yeah, I get it.

(he looks at the Old Man with a tight grin)

What's new with you—

He looks toward the newsstand and the sign over it.

## 80. CLOSE SHOT SIGN

Which reads, "Pop Marshak's Newstand. Tobacco. Candy."

## 81. TWO SHOT MARSHAK AND THE OLD MAN

MARSHAK

How's the journalism business?

The Old Man continues to stare at him.

OLD MAN

(very soft voice)

What's the matter with you?

Are you sick? Something wrong with your mind? You punchy, Andy?

MARSHAK

(grins)

That must be it. I'm punchy.

Why? Am I supposed to recognize you?

He takes out the cigarette, blows out a cloud of smoke.

OLD MAN

(softly)

Yeah. Yeah, I guess you would.

MARSHAK

We know each other from before someplace?

OLD MAN

(nods, his voice continuing soft)

That's right.

MARSHAK

Long time ago though, huh?

(he shakes his head)

I don't remember you, old man. How do I know you?

OLD MAN

How do you know me?

(a little grimly)

As a son should know his father. What kind of game you playin', Andy?

## 82. CLOSE SHOT MARSHAK

Reacting. His eyes narrow in thought.

MARSHAK

Son? I'm your son?

OLD MAN

(nods)

You were. You were before you ran out. You were before you broke your mother's heart. Before you did dirt to a sweet, decent little girl who would have cut off an arm for you. But now you ain't my son. Now you're nothing to me, Andy. You're nothing. I hate your guts.

(he shakes his head, trying to stifle the anger that rises up hot inside of him)

Do you hear me? I hate your guts.

## 83. CLOSE SHOT MARSHAK

As he looks the Old Man up and down. He snorts out a laugh, turns abruptly and starts to head in the opposite direction. The Old Man grabs him and whirls him around.

OLD MAN

(his voice shrill and out of control)

Things go down hard—you just walk away, huh, Andy? People get in your way—you just step on them. Just kick them away.

Marshak throws the Old Man's arm off, pushes him out of the way and continues to walk. The Old Man at his elbow, shouting, screaming, trying to grab at him.

OLD MAN

Hey, everybody, look what we've got here. A dirty little punk! Andy Marshak, a dirty little punk. Everybody look!



Again Marshak tries to force the Old Man back but he hangs on, pulling, clawing, still with a shrill voice.

#### OLD MAN

Spit in his mother's eye, this one. Ruined a girl's life, this one here. Hurt people. All the time hurt people. Hey, everybody, look at this punk here. Look at this -

Marshak, looking left and right, bugged by the Old Man's voice, white hot because of the Old Man's pulling, yanking fingers that clutch at him, suddenly hauls off and backhands the Old Man across the face, propelling him backwards to fall in a heap on the sidewalk. Marshak looks at him briefly then turns and walks away.

#### 84. PAN SHOT OVER TO OLD MAN ON SIDEWALK

He slowly gets up to his knees, shakes his head, looks after the retreating Marshak.

#### OLD MAN

(in a weak, quavery voice)  
Look at him. Look at the punk. Look at the monster. Look at Andy Marshak ... look at my son!  
Then he puts his head down

and starts to cry.

DISSOLVE TO:

#### 85. INT. HOTEL ROOM NIGHT

Marshak enters.

#### 86. FULL SHOT THE ROOM

As he opens up a bureau, takes an armful of clothes, opens up the suitcase, shoves the clothes in, goes over to the dresser, clears the top of comb, brush, etc., throws those into the suitcase. Then he crosses over to the bathroom, takes a shaving brush and razor, is about to turn and carry them into the room when he suddenly sees his reflection in the mirror. He grins at the reflection and then stares at it for a moment, the smile fading.

#### 87. CLOSE SHOT REFLECTION IN MIRROR

#### 88. PAN SHOT BACK OVER TO HIM

By the time it reaches him his face has changed. We're now looking at Foster's face. He touches the face with fingertips, running over the contours, examining, inventorying, and liking what he sees. He nods, smiles, turns, goes back into the bedroom.

#### 89. MOVING SHOT WITH HIM

As he goes back into the bedroom, stops at the bed, checks his watch, throws a couple of other items into the suitcase, then closes it, latches it shut.

#### 90. CLOSE SHOT FOSTER

As suddenly he stiffens. There's the sound of a key in the door from outside. He turns very softly and warily cat-walks over to it.

#### 91. CLOSE SHOT DOOR KNOB

As it turns. PULL BACK for medium shot of the door as it opens and hides Foster, who stands behind it. A heavyset detective enters, closing the door behind him and when the door closes the CAMERA remains on Arch Hammer, who now stands there.

#### DETECTIVE

(turns to him)

Is that where you generally stand behind the door?

#### HAMMER

When people I don't know unlock my door - yeah, that's where I stand.

#### DETECTIVE

Arch Hammer, huh? Detroit, Michigan.

#### HAMMER

Never been there.

#### DETECTIVE

Of course you haven't. Neither was Henry Ford. You're down for a bunko rap, Mr. Hammer. I gotta put you on the book. You can make two calls when you get to the station.

#### 92. CLOSE SHOT HAMMER

As he bites his lip, the wheels turning furiously in his mind.

#### HAMMER

Can I put on a coat?

#### 93. TWO SHOT

#### DETECTIVE

Be my guest.

# The Four of Us Are Dying

(his ferret-like eyes search around the room, then with a smile)

Where is it, Hammer? Up on the roof?

HAMMER

In the closet there.

The Detective points to the closet door, takes out a .46, holds it easily in front of him, sits down, pointing toward the closet.

DETECTIVE

Go ahead.

Hammer walks over to the closet, swings the door open. It's empty save for some hangers. He rattles them around for a moment, his back to the Detective, who continues to watch him intently. Then he slowly turns toward the Detective.

## 94. CLOSE SHOT DETECTIVE

As he reacts, involuntarily getting up to his feet in a rush, staring.

## 95. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD HAMMER

Who is now Foster. Foster takes a step out of the closet.

FOSTER

Guy went by me in a rush.  
Went right through the wall.

The Detective starts toward the closet in a mad dash, almost throws himself into it, staring left to right. Then he whirls around toward Foster, who is just going out the door.

DETECTIVE

(shouts)  
Hey!

He takes off after him across the room close behind him.

CUT TO:

## 96. EXT. HOTEL

This is impressionistic again with just steps leading up to a door over which is a hotel sign. Foster has just come out

of the door and stands there looking left to right. He takes out a cigarette, turns away from the camera, bends his head, lights it, then turns around. This is accomplished just as the Detective comes out after him. His face is now Marshak's. The Detective, panting, comes up alongside of him looking wildly around. After a brief look at Marshak's face:

DETECTIVE

Guy just come outa here?

MARSHAK

(nods, points down the street)  
Took off down the street.

DETECTIVE

Thanks.

He starts to run down the steps, disappearing off camera. Marshak chuckles, sits down on the steps, takes a few drags from the cigarette and then his face freezes as he stares down toward the foot of the steps. The Old Man stands there and he's carrying a gun.

MARSHAK

(slowly rises)  
Hey, old man ...

OLD MAN

You got such a debt, Andy.  
You owe for so many years  
... for so many things. And  
now you pay off, son.

He raises the gun.

MARSHAK

(shouts)  
Wait a minute ... wait a  
minute!  
(he shakes his head wildly)  
You got the wrong guy. I  
swear to you—you got the  
wrong guy!

OLD MAN

(raising the gun now)  
I got the right guy.

MARSHAK

(screams)  
No, please. Please listen ...  
put the gun down ... I'll  
show you ... I'll show you,

honest—but I got to  
concentrate. I got to think.  
You'll see ... just put the  
gun down, you'll see—I just  
got to concentrate—

## 97. MOVING SHOT WITH HIM

As he moves down the steps, his hands out, pleading, supplicating, and then the Old Man lets him have it. The bullet hits him head on, almost lifting him off the ground, flinging him against the steps. He lets out one short gasp and then slowly rolls down the steps one by one.

## 98. CAMERA DOLLIES IN FROM HIGH ANGLE

Until it is framed on his face. It begins to change from Marshak to Foster back to Marshak then to Hammer. Now it changes to Sterig back to Hammer. Then to Foster again. Then the cycle begins all over again.

## 99. TIGHT PROFILE OF FACE

As we hear the Narrator's voice-over.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

He was Arch Hammer, a  
cheap little man who just  
checked in.

(a pause)

He was Johnny Foster, who  
played a trumpet and was  
loved beyond words.

(a pause)

He was Virgil Sterig, with  
money in his pocket.

(a pause)

He was Andy Marshak, who  
got some of his agony back  
on the steps of a cheap hotel  
... Hammer ... Foster ...  
Sterig ... Marshak ... and  
all four of them are dying!

Start a SLOW DOLLY UP until  
we're on a tableau of him as  
he lies on the ground, the Old  
Man a few feet from him, his  
head down.

TAKE SLOW

FADE TO BLACK

THE END

# TV's Twilight Zone: Part Fourteen

CONTINUING MARC SCOTT ZICREE'S  
SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE TO THE ENTIRE  
TWILIGHT ZONE TELEVISION SERIES,  
COMPLETE WITH ROD SERLING'S OPENING  
AND CLOSING NARRATIONS



*"You unlock this door with the key of imagination. Beyond it is another dimension—a dimension of sound, a dimension of sight, a dimension of mind. You're moving into a land of both shadow and substance, of things and ideas. You've just crossed over into the Twilight Zone."*



## 111. PRINTER'S DEVIL

Written by Charles Beaumont  
Based on his short story,  
"The Devil, You Say?"  
Producer: Herbert Hirschman  
Director: Ralph Senensky  
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
Music: Stock  
Cast  
Mr. Smith: Burgess Meredith  
Douglas Winter: Robert Sterling  
Jackie Benson: Patricia Crowley  
Mr. Franklin: Ray Teal  
Andy Fraskins: Charles Thompson  
Landlady: Doris Kemper  
Molly: Camille Franklin

*"Take away a man's dream, fill him with whiskey and despair, send him to a lonely bridge, let him stand there all by himself looking down at the black water, and try to imagine the thoughts that are in his mind. You can't, I can't. But there's someone who can—and that someone is seated next to Douglas Winter right now. The car is headed back toward town, but its real destination is the Twilight Zone."*

Doug Winter, dedicated editor of the *Danzburg Courier*, is being driven out of business by the *Gazette*, which is owned by a big newspaper syndicate. When his linotype operator resigns, Doug is sure the *Courier's* had it; he gets drunk and contemplates jumping off a bridge. He is interrupted in this by Mr. Smith, a salacious, cigar-smoking fellow who offers to work free as a reporter and linotype operator—and puts up \$5,000 cash to pay off the *Courier's* debts. Jackie Benson, Doug's girl friend and devoted employee, is suspicious of Smith, but Doug, seeing this as the paper's only chance, hires him on. Soon, Smith is turning out editions with sensationalistic headlines that cause the readership to soar. But when the *Gazette* building burns down and the *Courier* reports the story within thirty minutes of the event, Doug suspects Smith may be doing more than just reporting. This is confirmed when Smith shows Doug an article on a local sweepstakes winner—written before the winner knows it himself. Smith then produces a contract: his services in exchange for Doug's soul—Smith is the Devil! Doug scoffs at this, but, fearful of losing Smith and having to face the bridge again, he signs. He soon has reason to regret it, though, as Smith gleefully brings about a wave of

disasters to fill the *Courier's* front page. When Doug pleads with him to stop, Smith replies that he'll stop—if Doug kills himself. He then tells Doug that he's set a story on the linotype machine saying that Jackie will be seriously hurt in a car crash that evening. Smith has modified the machine; whatever's typed on it comes to pass—the only thing that will save Jackie is Doug's death. As Doug ponders what to do, Smith asks Jackie to drive him out of town. He then takes the wheel, intending to steer headlong into an oncoming car. With only minutes to go, Doug sets in type a story stating that his contract with Smith is rendered null and void and that Smith is *banished*. Just in time, Smith vanishes; Jackie's car sideswipes the other vehicle and she escapes unharmed. From now on, Doug will battle the *Gazette* without Smith's aid—and the first order of business is to get rid of that linotype machine!

*"Exit the infernal machine, and with it his satanic majesty, Lucifer, prince of darkness—otherwise known as Mr. Smith. He's gone, but not for good; that wouldn't be like him—he's gone for bad. And he might be back, with another ticket to—the Twilight Zone."*

## 112. NO TIME LIKE THE PAST

Written by Rod Serling

Producer: Herbert Hirschman

Director: Justus Addiss

Dir. of Photography: Robert W. Pittack

Music: Stock

### Cast

Paul Driscoll: Dana Andrews

Abigail Sloan: Patricia Breslin

Harvey: Robert F. Simon

Japanese Police Capt.: James Yagi

Lusitania Captain: Tudor Owen

Bartender: Lindsay Workman

Prof. Eliot: Malcolm Atterbury

Mrs. Chamberlain: Marjorie Bennett

Hanford: Robert Cornwaite

Horn Player: John Zaremba

*"Exit one Paul Driscoll, a creature of the twentieth century. He puts to a test a complicated theorem of space-time continuum, but he goes a step further—or tries to. Shortly, he will seek out three moments of the past in a desperate attempt to alter the present—one of the odd and fanciful functions in a shadowland known as the Twilight Zone."*

Sick to death of the constant threat of nuclear obliteration in the modern world, Driscoll utilizes a time machine in order to change past events. He soon finds, however, that it isn't as simple as he had thought: a Japanese police captain steadfastly refuses to believe that Hiroshima is about to have an atom bomb dropped on it; his assassination attempt on Adolph Hitler is foiled when a German maid summons the Gestapo; and the captain of the Lusitania rejects his claims that the ship is going to be torpedoed as the ravings of a lunatic. Driscoll returns to the present, convinced that the past can't be

changed. Instead, he decides to escape into it. He uses the time machine to transport him back to Homeville, Indiana, on July 1, 1881. Finding the town lovely and serene, he checks into the local boardinghouse and meets Abigail Sloan, an attractive schoolteacher. Driscoll intends to stay, and *not* interfere with events; when he realizes that President Garfield is shortly to be assassinated, he keeps mum. All goes well for two days, but then Driscoll refers to a book he's brought along with him—a book of Midwestern history—and discovers that a kerosene lantern is about to be thrown from a runaway wagon, setting Abby's school building afire and seriously injuring twelve children. Driscoll feels compelled to intervene. Seeing Professor Eliot's medicine wagon near the school, he pleads with Eliot to unhitch the horses. When Eliot refuses, he tries forcibly to unhitch them himself. Eliot, in trying to knock Driscoll away with his whip, frightens the

horses and they run out of control. The lamp is thrown from the wagon and the school burns—in trying to stop the fire from happening, Driscoll has caused it to happen. Driscoll bids Abby farewell, telling her that he can be no part of her world. He returns to the present, content to leave the yesterdays alone—and determined to work on changing the tomorrows.

*"Incident on a July afternoon, 1881. A man named Driscoll who came and went and, in the process, learned a simple lesson, perhaps best said by a poet named Lathbury, who wrote, 'Children of yesterday, heirs of tomorrow, what are you weaving? Labor and sorrow? Look to your looms again, faster and faster fly the great shuttles prepared by the master. Life's in the loom, room for it, room! Tonight's tale of clocks and calendars—in the Twilight Zone.'"*





### 113. THE PARALLEL

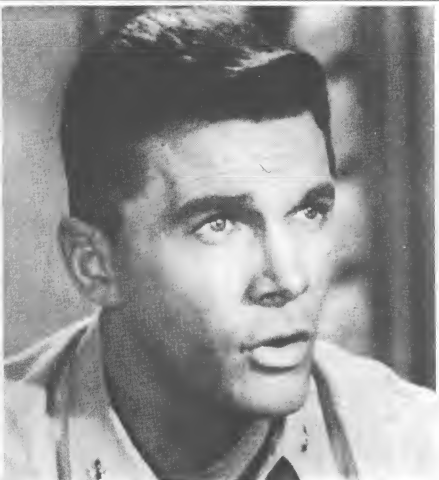
Written by Rod Serling  
Producer: Bert Granet  
Director: Alan Crosland  
Dir. of Photography: Robert W. Pittack  
Music: Stock

#### Cast

Robert Gaines: Steve Forrest  
Helen Gaines: Jacqueline Scott  
Col. Connacher: Frank A'tetter  
Maggie Gaines: Shari Lee Bernath  
General Eaton: Philip Abbott  
Captain: Morgan Jones  
Project Manager: William Sargent  
Psychiatrist: Paul Comi

*"In the vernacular of space, this is T minus one hour, sixty minutes before a human being named Major Robert Gaines is lifted off from the Mother Earth and rocketed into the sky, farther and longer than any man ahead of him. Call this one of the first faltering steps of man to sever the umbilical cord of gravity and stretch out a fingertip toward an unknown. In a moment we'll join this astronaut named Gaines and embark on an adventure, because the environs overhead—the stars, the sky, the infinite space—are all part of a vast question mark known as the Twilight Zone."*

While orbiting the Earth, Gaines' capsule inexplicably disappears from the radar screens. Gaines wakes up in a hospital. He was found in his capsule forty-six miles from point of lift-off, the capsule—which had no gear for landing on solid ground—completely undamaged. It is a mystery for which Gaines has no explanation. He soon finds, however, that it is but the first of a number of mysteries: Colonel Connacher claims not to have called Gaines' wife Helen prior to the launch when Gaines is certain that he did; Gaines' house has



a white picket fence he's never seen before; and everyone says he's a colonel when he knows he's a major. Both his wife and his daughter Maggie sense something strangely different about him. Doubting his own mind, he visits the Army Psychiatric Division. A psychiatrist finds Gaines' delusions peculiar, particularly his belief that the President of the United States is John F. Kennedy—someone no one else has ever heard of. Later, Gaines tells Connacher that he's looked through a set of encyclopedias and found a number of historical facts subtly altered, as though this is a world parallel to the one he knows. Connacher finds this all hard to swallow. To prove his point, Gaines asks Maggie who he is. She doesn't know—all she knows is that he's not her daddy! Meanwhile, back at the base, scientists have discovered that the capsule in which Gaines was found is not the one they sent up, but rather an almost-identical duplicate. Asking Gaines to identify it, he runs toward the capsule—and abruptly finds himself back in orbit, bringing his capsule in

for a splash-down. In the hospital, Gaines learns that he was out of radar contact for six hours. He tells General Eaton and Colonel Connacher that he was in a parallel world populated by duplicates of all of them, in which he was a colonel. The others dismiss this as a bizarre delusion, but then an officer rushes up to them with the news that just moments ago the Cape picked up an unidentified spacecraft on radar for a period of ninety seconds—accompanied by a radio transmission from a Colonel Robert Gaines!

*"Major Robert Gaines, a latter-day voyager just returned from an adventure. Submitted to you without any recommendations as to belief or disbelief. You can accept or reject; you pays your money and you takes your choice. But credulous or incredulous, don't bother to ask anyone for proof that it could happen. The obligation is a reverse challenge: prove that it couldn't. This happens to be . . . the Twilight Zone."*

#### 114. I DREAM OF GENIE

Written by John Furia, Jr.  
Producer: Herbert Hirschman  
Director: Robert Gist  
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
Music: Fred Steiner

##### Cast

George P. Hanley: Howard Morris  
Ann: Patricia Barry  
Roger: Mark Miller  
Genie: Jack Albertson  
Watson: Loring Smith  
Starlet: Joyce Jameson  
Masters: James Milhollin  
Clerk: Robert Ball  
Sam: Bob Hastings


*"Meet Mr. George P. Hanley, a man life treats without deference, honor or success. Waiters serve his soup cold. Elevator operators close doors in his face. Mothers never bother to wait up for the daughters he dates. George is a creature of humble habits and tame dreams. He's an ordinary man, Mr. Hanley, but at this moment the accidental possessor of a very special gift, the kind of gift that measures men against their dreams, the kind of gift most of us might ask for first and possibly regret to the last, if we, like Mr. George P. Hanley, were about to plunge headfirst and unaware into our own personal Twilight Zone."*

Searching for a birthday present for Ann, an attractive secretary at the office where he works as a bookkeeper, George is suckered into buying a tarnished Arabian lamp for twenty dollars. When Roger, a handsome, aggressive co-worker, gives Ann a revealing negligee, George is too embarrassed to present his gift. Feeling very much the sap, he takes it home and tries to shine it up with a rag. Suddenly, a genie appears—speaking in modern slang and wearing modern clothes (with the



exception of his curl-toe shoes). George is allowed only one wish, so he must ponder it carefully. The genie returns to the lamp to give George time to think it over. At first, wishing for love appeals to him. He fantasizes being married to Ann, now become a movie star. Unfortunately, she's so famous and busy that she has no time for him—and then he discovers that she's having an affair with Roger, her leading man! The next day at work, he daydreams about wishing for great wealth. He is G. Peter Hanley, magnanimous industrialist. Ann is his secretary; Roger his chauffeur. Filled to the brim with charity, he gives a bedraggled newsboy a \$100 bill for a paper. But, when he tries to donate \$1,200,000 to his alma mater, his act is labeled ostentation—and when he decides to stop buying things he's called subversive! Clearly, wealth is not the answer. Finally, George imagines what it would be like to wish for power. He is George P. Hanley, President of the United States. When Ann, now an elderly mother, pleads mercy for her son who is going to be hanged for falling asleep on guard duty, George grants the boy a pardon. But then Roger, a

four-star general, barges in with a group of Presidential advisors. Alien spaceships have been sighted on radar; George must decide whether to shoot them out of the sky or let them land and risk possible invasion. The responsibility is too great, George can't decide—and power isn't the answer, either. But George has decided on his wish at last. Later, a bum fishes the lamp from a trashcan and rubs it tentatively with a rag. A genie appears, dressed in turban and traditional Arabian garb. This genie offers three wishes—and his name is George P. Hanley!

*"Mr. George P. Hanley. Former vocation: jerk. Present vocation: genie. George P. Hanley, a most ordinary man whom life treated without deference, honor or success, but a man wise enough to decide on a most extraordinary wish that makes him the contented, permanent master of his own altruistic Twilight Zone."* 

## In June's TZ...



You'll see the *Twilight Zone* episode that never was: **THE DOLL**, a major unproduced TZ script by fantasy king **Richard Matheson**—complete with new illustrations. Plus the story behind the script, by **Marc Scott Zicree**... You'll get a full-color preview of **BLADE RUNNER**, with **Harrison Ford** as a 21st-century bounty hunter stalking the back alleys and boardrooms of a future metropolis—under the guiding hand of *Alien* director **Ridley Scott**... And in a provocative TZ Interview, you'll meet the man who started it all: Hugo-winning author **Philip K. Dick**, who created the perilous world of *Blade Runner* in his novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*... Just in time for Mother's Day, we offer a trio of eerie tales—**ALAN'S MOTHER, ZOMBIES**, and **MRS. HALFBOOGER'S BASEMENT**—about three highly unusual moms... Plus a saga of Indian tribal magic by **Pamela Sargent**, a nightmarish vignette called **THE DARK ONES** by **Richard Christian Matheson**, and a day in the life of the last man on earth by **Bruce Balfour**... You don't have

to be a baseball fan to love **BROWNING'S LAMPS**. Even if you snored through the last World Series, you'll be drawn into the mystery of this weird and wonderful novelette by **David Nemec**, about an unsung hero of the sports world... Pitchers of another sort—the sort that hold cream—were transformed into bizarre birds, fantastic animals, and grotesque freaks of nature by the **Martin Brothers**, four Edwardian geniuses who molded the impossible in clay. Their incredible work is on exhibit in next month's TZ... Take our advice—or rather, that of our reviewers. **Thomas Disch** suggests the books worth buying, **Jack Sullivan** recommends records, and **Gahan Wilson** tells you which movies to catch—and which to avoid... There'll also be an extra helping of Lovecraftian horror, more of **Marc Scott Zicree's SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE TO 'THE TWILIGHT ZONE,'** and, at long last, a few appropriately sinister cartoons... It's all in June's *Twilight Zone*: a lot of entertainment for just two dollars.